

Proposed Operational Staffing Enhancements for the Houston Police Department



The mission of the Houston Police Department is to enhance the quality of life in the city of Houston by working cooperatively with the public to prevent crime, enforce the law, preserve the peace, and provide a safe environment.

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Acknowledgments

This report is the culmination of considerable time and effort put forth by several entities within the Houston Police Department.

Several sessions with the Senior Executive Staff and the Executive Staff were conducted to solicit input about implications associated with the results of the PERF / Justex Operational Staffing Report.

Statistical data was gleaned and verified from several Captains and their respective staffs to illustrate the effort put forth in providing services within our great city.

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Executive Summary

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and Justex System, Inc. (Justex) were hired to conduct a limited work demands analysis focusing on the Houston Police Department's (HPD) Patrol and Investigative Operations. They produced a report entitled: "Houston Police Department – Operations Staffing Model" in which they provided performance based patrol staffing options and identified needs for additional investigative personnel in selected divisions. *Their intent was not to state and justify how many officers the HPD needs; but to discuss staffing in terms of activities and results to be achieved with an increased compliment of staff.*

It is important to note, Houston is not experiencing any type of public safety crisis. Although the crime rate trend line has been decreasing over a period of years and core services are currently being adequately provided; serious concerns are starting to emerge. This report contains an unprecedented look at core service work being provided by the HPD and the effects from those efforts. Signs are emerging showing the HPD is struggling (or beginning to struggle) with the following types of services:

1. Fielding two-officer responses to dangerous calls for service;
2. Meeting response time goals for Priority Response Code #3, #4, and #5 calls;
3. Maintaining adequate visibility as a deterrent to crime in neighborhoods;
4. Sufficiently lowering the crime rate through the use of consistent and comprehensive interdiction tactics;
5. Adequately enforcing traffic laws, which in turn affect mobility;
6. Investigating criminal cases in a timely manner;
7. Successfully clearing workable crime cases; and
8. Investigating crashes in a timely manner.

The primary issue at hand is not if the police department can continue to provide acceptable responses to core service work demands despite these growing difficulties; but how well can they continue to do so given the competitive nature of these demands and the omnipresence of new demands which will also vie for attention.

After analyzing the various staffing options, it is the contention of the HPD Command Staff that approximately 1,220 officers and 140 supervisors need to be infused into patrol and investigative operations over a period of time.

The HPD is proposing the creation of a strategic growth plan based on establishing a ten-year hiring timeline. Included within this plan is a provision to institute a "sunset provision" that requires the HPD to present before city council every third year the need to continue the pursuit of the growth goal.

Establishing an elongated growth plan not only helps smooth costs over time, but also allows for shifts in variables that could affect decisions to continue funding additional personnel.

The acquisition of additional personnel can come from a combination of four distinct, but related strategies: 1) hiring new officers, 2) functional consolidation, 3) use of overtime, and 4) civilianization. This means the HPD does not need to grow its overall classified staffing by the stated amount.

The approximate cost of this plan for the first five years is included within this report. To speculate the full cost of a ten-year plan would be questionable when considering possible effects of future Meet and Confer Contracts and the city's financial stature. This is why the inclusion of a sunset provision within this plan makes sense.

The keys to moving forward are twofold. First, there must be some consensus increasing staff within the HPD is an appropriate step to take. Second, a dedicated funding stream for this purpose must be established for law enforcement (if not for public safety in general).

According to recent reports, the upcoming fiscal years stand to be difficult for Houston employees. As has occurred previously, decisions, some more difficult than others, will be made to successfully plot a course to navigate the city through this impending dilemma. The HPD needs assurances that when the time is appropriate, this document will serve as a catalyst to move forward with a firm commitment to help keep Houston a safe place so citizens can pursue their quality of life aspirations without experiencing unreasonable levels of fear for their personal safety.

Purpose of Report

The Houston Police Department (HPD) hired the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and Justex Systems, Inc. (herein referred to as Justex) to conduct a “restricted” work demands analysis (WDA) to determine the need for additional staffing. Both vendors were required to focus their efforts on personnel growth implications for patrol and investigative operations, which as is the case with any police agency, is responsible for providing the bulk of police services to citizens. They produced a report entitled: “Houston Police Department – Operational Staffing Model” (herein referred to as the Report).

The emphasis and content of the PERF / Justex Report was unlike previous work demands analyses reports conducted by or within the HPD. The principle difference was a change of focus in which staffing increases were linked to performance variables associated with specific types of services. PERF and Justex did not provide a specific staffing number; instead they made a very astute observation, which was reiterated during their May 30, 2014, Public Safety Committee (PSC) presentation:

It is important to note that there are no standard levels for patrol or investigations; each police department makes its own decisions about how it deploys resources. There is no “correct” or accepted level of either patrol or investigative staffing.¹

This observation changes the fundamental premise upon which police chiefs have sought to justify staffing increases. No longer is there a need to debate what the “right number” is for the HPD. The provision of police service is very dependent upon the type and level of work demands emanating from a community. Those demands account for how much staff is needed, and most importantly what that staff is expected to achieve.

The bulk of the staffing recommendations contained within the PERF / Justex Report were linked to time and effort taken to provide specific types of services (formula driven). Said differently, if you want to provide different types of service; if you want to expand a type of service; or if you need to expend more effort for a type of service – it will equate to a need for this many officers. The implication being with the present staffing compliment, the HPD can continue providing current levels of service knowing some of which adequately meets demands while some does not. However, if demand volume increases, significantly diversifies, or becomes more complex, the department will struggle to respond, especially in lieu of its current service obligations and commitments.

Shortly after the PSC presentation, Police Chief Charles A. McClelland, Jr. stated he needed time to read and digest the information within the PERF / Justex Report before making recommendations to Mayor Parker.

¹ Houston Police Department – Operations Staffing Model, May 2014, Police Executive Research Forum and Justex Systems, Inc. p. 16.

The purpose of this report is to provide descriptive context and justification to support recommendations for increasing staff levels within the HPD.

This report is organized into eight sections:

- **Section One: Guiding Axioms for Decision Making** – briefly describes five axioms that guide Command Staff discussions and decision-making governing the use of staff within the HPD.
- **Section Two: The Challenge of Providing Police Services in Houston** – is an extensive discussion about “core services.” These fundamental services represent work demands that must be routinely performed under any circumstances. The nature and volume of this work is diverse and complex further complicating the Department’s ability to provide thorough services on a consistent basis with existing staffing levels.
- **Section Three: The Relationship between Technology and Staffing** – specific types of technology are briefly discussed in terms of their status as a “force multiplier.” It has often been said the use of certain technologies will offset the need to hire additional personnel. This Section identifies which of those HPD infused technologies have a direct impact on staffing.
- **Section Four: The Relationship between Management and Staffing** – one of the most difficult challenges for police executives is providing adequate services without exceeding their budget allocation. This strain requires Command Staff to make decisions governing the management of its most valuable resources. This Section contains multiple examples of how the HPD has stretched its human capital to address important work demands.
- **Section Five: Staffing Needs for the Houston Police Department** – this Section contains recommendations for additional staffing with brief explanations as to their assignments and responsibilities.
- **Section Six: The Effects of Civilianization** – the need to hire additional police officers can be somewhat offset by reassigning officers from positions and responsibilities that could be performed by qualified civilians. This Section discusses the pros and cons associated with this viable strategy.
- **Section Seven: Cost Implications for Additional Staff** – hiring staff is a very expensive undertaking; one that cannot be taken lightly. This Section identifies projected costs and hiring timelines associated with recommended staffing increases proposed in Section Five.
- **Section Eight: Conclusion** – consists of a brief discussion highlighting the importance of recognizing how critical police staffing is within the overall context of maintaining safety within Houston, especially in anticipation of new services emerging in the future.

The discussions contained within this report are designed to be educational, instructive, and at times, thought provoking. There is no attempt to suggest the Department is in a crisis mode where its ability to continue providing services is at risk. This could only happen if budget constrictions forced entrenchment strategies to become the norm because of significant losses of existing classified or civilian personnel.

This report serves to put readers on notice that left unaddressed, staffing deficiencies will, in time adversely affect the HPD's ability to provide expected quality services designed to keep our citizens and Houston safe.

Section One Guiding Axioms for Decision-Making

For the past three decades, the philosophy of the Houston Police Department has been consistent with the concept of community policing. With a concentrated focus on neighborhoods, the pursuit to maintain safety consists of implementing geographically-based law enforcement initiatives to interdict criminal activity facilitated by identifying target offenders; working with community partners, and addressing inherent problems of crime and disorder. The manner in which this is accomplished is dependent on a number of factors, chief among them are sufficient personnel and effective decision-making.

When it comes to discussing any important issue effecting the provision of police services, there must be some assurances that decisions made by the organization's executives (herein referred to as the Command Staff²) are governed by important axioms, or common truths associated with police work. Citizens must be convinced decisions affecting their safety are not made haphazardly; but are based on sound judgment and reason. Furthermore, these decisions must, where possible, be subject to public scrutiny with decision makers being held accountable for actions taken or lack thereof.

The purpose of this Section is to demonstrate Command Staff decisions are made in accordance with several important axioms. These axioms help shape discussions and decisions not only governing the utilization of staffing, but other important matters affecting the safety of the public:

- 1. From a general perspective, the type and amount of "police work" emanating from a community typically exceeds a police department's capacity to deliver services in a manner consistent with citizen expectations.**

Implication:

Houston is an extraordinarily unique city from a law enforcement perspective. The geographical size, constant population growth, shifting density proportions, growth of businesses, a huge, active port, massive arterial and residential roadway system, unrelenting traffic congestion, increasing regulatory commitments, and evolving diversity of its citizenry are but a few significant factors that contribute to placing a wide array of service demands on the Houston Police Department. *The issue in question is not if the police department can respond to these demands, but how well it can respond to competing demands for service.*

² For the Houston Police Department, the Command Staff lead by the Chief of Police consists of Captains, Assistant Chiefs, Executive Assistant Chiefs, and Civilian equivalents for each of these ranks.

- 2. Command Staff personnel are expected to make resource allocation and operational decisions that will effectively address service demands and be accomplished within the confines of their respective budgets.**

Implication:

Citizens should expect their police department's Command Staff to be the most knowledgeable, experienced, and competent personnel capable of making informed decisions based on their understanding of conditions and perspectives influencing the provision of services.

- 3. Citizens should expect the HPD Command Staff to be accountable for decisions made and funds expended.**

Implications:

Accountability is an obligation to answer for the discharge of responsibilities that affect others in important ways. The answering should be for intentions as well as results. When responsibilities affect the public in important ways, the decision-maker's answering must be public. If responsibilities affect employees and others within organizations, the answering is to those in the organization. If responsibilities also affect citizens to whom a service is provided, the answering is to those citizens.

The principle aim of public answering is to let citizens know whose needs or wants are intended to be honored by decision-makers, how they would be honored and why, so citizens' decisions about these intentions can be better informed.³

Citizens and public interest groups must assess the fairness of the answering. When necessary, the reporting is validated by *an independent professional audit or performance review*. The assessment determines whether the answering is fair and complete.⁴

- 4. It is extremely expensive to increase staffing within any police agency. The amount of personnel growth and attendant support is directly linked to availability of funds dedicated for this purpose.**

³ Particular attention should be devoted to identifying performance indicants that are achievable and measurable. To reiterate an important cliché in policing – one should measure what matters because that which is measured garners the attention of those performing the work.

⁴ For further information regarding principles of accountability see: www.accountabilitycircle.org

Implication:

Elected officials have an enormously difficult challenge of allocating a limited supply of tax dollars to fund services to the public. What further compounds this situation is the ongoing struggle between satiating citizens' demands for expanded and / or improved services and the ability to fund that capacity. If the request for additional staff is adequately justified; if elected officials' deem this need as a worthy expense of public money; then it falls upon them to identify funds and appropriate them accordingly.

5. Citizens have a right to know what the *return on investment* is to justify a commitment of funding to increase staffing within their police department.

Implications:

From a financial perspective, a return on investment is a simple calculation (i.e., one can calculate earnings by applying an annual interest rate against one's principal). It is a far more difficult concept to apply in the "business of policing." *The unpredictability of the nature of police work makes it increasingly difficult to establish a "cause and effect" relationship between expended resources and accomplishments achieved from the use of those resources.*

Crime cannot be completely eliminated, nor can the police be everywhere at once. Despite these facts, with additional staffing comes a serious expectation that increased police activity will have a measureable effect on reducing the scope and intensity of crime and disorder within Houston.

One critical key to reducing crime and disorder is determining what officers will be doing; how their efforts will be supervised and managed; and how their outputs and outcomes will be measured so as to compare with anticipated expectations.

The importance of these five axioms and their implications cannot be understated. Providing police service is not easy. It requires difficult decisions to be made every day. Those decisions cannot be made in a vacuum and they demand accountability. The HPD Command Staff is fully aware of these conditions and understand the influence they have on decisions they make.

Section Two **The Challenge of Providing Police Services in Houston**

All cities in the United States are unique; but the degree of uniqueness certainly varies among them. Houston's geographic sprawl is every bit as unique as Chicago or New York City's incredible density. Subsequently, all three cities approach their service obligations differently, despite the similarity in the nature of services demanded and provided. The same can be said for cities much smaller in size and population than Houston.

The issue of staffing must be customized to the unique needs and demands of each municipality. While it is enviable to point to other cities and claim: "we should have what they have;" such comparisons simply have no legitimate type of validity.

Providing police services within any city is challenging. Part of this difficulty is due to the type of services citizens want or expect from their police department. Some services are more important than others and, at times, have been referred to as "core services." For the HPD, those core services are depicted in Figure #1:

Core Services Provided by the Houston Police Department

Figure #1



The provision of these services is important because they represent how the HPD:

1. Maintains peace;
2. Resolves crime and disorder problems;
3. Holds suspects accountable for their actions;
4. Provides assistance to citizens; and
5. Reduces fear within Houston.

Let’s look at critical core services Houstonians routinely expect the HPD to provide:⁵

1. Core Service: Responding to Calls for Service

With all calls for police assistance, there is a citizen expectation the police will arrive promptly and address their concern(s). *The manner in which this responsibility is managed is critical in determining how efficiently the organization’s human resources are utilized.*⁶ This management perspective is so important because time not spent responding to and handling calls can and must be redirected toward preventing crime.

If one cannot demonstrate accountability as to how call management is performed; then one could reason existing resources are not being used effectively, which in turn diminishes the validity of needing additional manpower.

The volume of calls is an enormously influential variable affecting the staffing of any police agency. Call volume is attributed to neighborhood density and opportunities for suspects to commit crime and / or perpetuate disorder problems.

The average population for Houston over the past five years (2009 – 2013) has been 2,174,768.⁷ The average annual number of calls for service during this period of time is 1,160,143. The relationship between population, calls, and total classified staffing is presented in Table #1.

City of Houston / HPD Demographics*

Table #1

	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	5-Yr. Avg.
Population	2,245,108	2,257,412	2,100,017	2,119,831	2,151,475	2,174,768
Classified Staff**	5,357	5,393	5,352	5,295	5,378	5,355
Calls for Service	1,228,178	1,185,709	1,135,124	1,135,740	1,115,963	1,160,143

* Source: Population: Planning and Development Department, City of Houston, Calls: Emergency Communications Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

** This represents the total number of classified personnel within all ranks assigned to various duties throughout the HPD. On 12/31/08, classified strength was 5,074, which represented the first time the HPD had exceeded 5,000 classified personnel. Source: Employee Services Division, HPD

⁵ There is debate amongst government officials, citizens, and within police departments as to how core services should be prioritized. This becomes an important discussion when entrenchment strategies are mandated because of budgetary cutbacks. For purposes of this report, these services are not presented in accordance with a priority scheme.

⁶ Management of dispatch operations directly affects the quality of patrol operations and indirectly affects the success of criminal investigations because investigative work largely depends on the value of the preliminary investigation performed by patrol officers.

⁷ Source: Planning and Development Department, City of Houston, 2014.

A few observations are in order:

1. Staffing for the HPD has been relatively flat for the past 5 years.
2. Houston’s population has also been flat, but is trending slightly upwards.
3. One might expect with an increasing population calls for service would also rise; but in actuality the multi-year trend has been decreasing. This would suggest there is not necessarily a linkage between population growth and calls for police service; however, this is a small time period (5 years) and this assumption has not been empirically validated.

As a reminder, it is worth noting Houston is one of the largest “single city” landmass municipalities in the United States. When coupled with the HPD’s response time standards, this places an extraordinary burden on deployment schemes and managerial experience.

Given the high volume of citizen calls, and each citizen’s belief their call necessitates an immediate response; the HPD has developed a call code typology to manage call responses (See Table #2):

Response Typology*
Table #2

Priority Response Codes	Description	Queue Delay
E (Emergency)	Assist the Officer / Firefighter or Pursuit	Immediate
1	Life Threatening in Progress	1 Minute
2	Life Threatening Just Occurred; Property Crime in Progress	5 Minute
3	Life Threatening Delayed Report, Property Crime Just Occurred	18 Minutes
4	Serious Criminal Incidents, Delayed Reports; Non-Emergency Police Response Calls	23 Minutes
5	Minor Property Crime; Municipal Offense; Check By to Confirm Service Request; Possible Referrals	30 Minutes
6	Service Requests Handled by Patrol Desk Unit Personnel	35 Minutes
7	Teleserve Eligible Calls Requiring a Field Response	40 Minutes
8	Self-Initiated Police Action	None
9	Used to Document a Citizen Was Referred to Some Other Entity; a General Broadcast – For Your Information (GBF) was Initiated by Dispatcher; No Dispatch of Patrol Units Required	None

* Source: Houston Police Department General Orders, 600-01, Issue Date: July 2014

The reasons citizens' call for police service varies tremendously. The Emergency Communications Division within the HPD uses 349 call codes to classify types of incoming calls for service.

These call codes are aligned with Priority Response Codes (listed in Table #2). This classification scheme allows dispatchers and officers to reasonably identify the immediacy level of a response and a level of safety associated with each call type.

As one would expect, some calls are more dangerous in nature than others and are coded accordingly thereby elevating safety awareness for citizen callers and responding officers. Officers know what these priority response codes mean and use them to govern their sense of urgency to respond and to anticipate safety concerns upon arriving at a scene.

The response typology serves as the basis of how calls are systemically managed by HPD personnel. There are three attendant issues associated with the call load. Each has important components that influence staffing levels within the HPD (See Figure #2).

Call Response Issues

Figure #2



Two-Officer Response: The most dangerous of calls necessitate a two-officer response. Because this is so important, the HPD has had in place for years a policy⁸ that specifies a two officer response to all Emergency and Priority Response Code 1 calls, plus any other call that involves a crisis intervention team member response, a weapon, a high priority in-progress event; a disturbance, or any traffic, heavy crowds, or significant safety events. Dispatchers are aware of this policy.

A sample of those types of calls is provided in Table #3 below:

⁸ General Order 600-01: Response Management

**Sample of Calls Requiring a
Two-Officer Response***

Table #3

Call Code	Call Type	5 Year Average
3040	Disturbance / Unknown Weapon	89,711
5221	Alarm / Residence	35,792
5222	Alarm / Business	29,051
3044	Disturbance / Family	22,900
2410	Crash / Major / Non-Fatal	18,131
3050	Trespasser / Prowler	16,851
1045	Assault In-Progress / Weapon Unknown	11,901
1310	Alarm / Hold-Up / Panic	9,628
4171	Assault / Just Occurred / No Injuries	9,335
3041	Disturbance / CIT	8,182

*Source: Crime Analysis and 4171 Command Center Division, Houston Police Department, September 2014

Sometimes people underestimate how unpredictable and dangerous responding to calls can be. Even with training and experience, one can never be too cautious when interacting with citizens who have been or are involved in emotionally charged situations. *Minimizing the probability of injuries to all parties involved in these events is directly related to staffing.*

As noted in Table #1, from 2009 – 2013 the HPD averaged responding to 1,160,143 calls per year. Of that total, approximately 346,649 calls (5 year average), or 30% of the total number of calls responded to, necessitated a two-officer response. The ability to maintain compliance with this policy can be seen in Table #4 below.

Two-Officer Response to Select Calls*

Table #4

Shift	5-Year Average Number of Eligible Two Officer Calls	5-Year Average Number of Two Officer Responses to Eligible Calls	Percentage of Calls Where Two Officers Responded
Shift 1 - Days	99,266	50,241	50.6%
Shift 2 - Evenings	149,834	80,841	54.0%
Shift 3 - Nights	97,540	56,108	57.5%
Totals:	346,649	187,190	54.1%

* Source: Houston Police Department, August 2014

Two points are worthy of consideration:

- First, one should not lose sight of the fact a lack of having a second responding officer does not unilaterally keep officers from promptly responding to these calls. In most instances, a single officer is inclined to respond and advise the dispatcher accordingly. Upon doing so, the officer expects a second officer will quickly be in route.
- Second, the lack of having a second officer respond increases the probability and risk for the responding officer, which could elevate risks to other parties at a scene.

Response Time: Every time a citizen calls for police service, there is an expectation about the time it takes an officer to respond. Citizens generally understand certain types of calls necessitate a quicker response than others. But that tolerance diminishes if citizens believe the actual response time is exceeding their expectations.

The HPD defines response time as the point in time a dispatcher receives the call from the call taker⁹ to the time an officer arrives to the scene of a call. Thus, the clock begins once a dispatcher receives a call.

⁹ Call takers are employees of the Houston Emergency Center (HEC), not the Houston Police Department. A call taker's primary responsibility is to acquire information from a citizen about the nature of the call (Why do you want the police?). Questions are then asked to gather important information about the incident in question. This information has value to the responding officer(s), but takes time to collect. This time is not incorporated into how the HPD calculates response times.

Time taken by the dispatcher to assign a call to an officer (referred to a queue time) is then measured. This is followed by the time it takes an officer to arrive at the location once s/he receives the call (referred to as travel time). Queue time plus travel time equals response time.

This definition excludes any time a citizen takes before calling the police; and, it excludes the time it takes a call taker to process the call. Arrival time declarations, by an officer, to the scene of a call are also critical in determining the accuracy of response time data.

The HPD uses a sophisticated formula to calculate response times that includes eliminating outliers that could skew results thereby making the data unreliable.¹⁰

Response times are measured in accordance with each Priority Response Code. The HPD has developed goals for each of these codes (See Table #5):

Components of Response Time Goals – In Minutes*

Table #5

Priority Response Code	Dispatch Queue Time Goal	Travel Time Goal	Total Response Time Goal
E	Immediate	5	5
1	1	5	6
2	5	5	10
3	18	5	23
4	23	5	28
5	30	5	35

* Source: Crime Analysis Analyst Database, HPD, July 2014

Note the increase in dispatch queue time goals as the priority response codes move from lower to higher numbers. This is indicative of calls being classified as less serious (in terms of safety and risk to the caller and associated parties) than other calls thereby providing flexibility for the overall management of all calls for service.

The HPD monitors queue times for dispatchable calls to ensure unnecessary delays are being avoided. These times are a direct reflection of an officer’s availability to receive a call assignment. Officer availability is affected by peak call times, shift changes, staffing levels, or the type of calls served – the more complex the issues necessitating a response, the longer officers spend servicing the call. Table #6 contains queue time data for the past five years:

¹⁰ Variables taken into account include cancelled calls, duplicate calls to same address, and lack of announcing arrival times.

Queue Times for Dispatchable Calls*

Table #6

Priority Response Code	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013	CY 2014**	Percent of Total Calls***
E	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	.11%
1	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	2.90%
2	3.1	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.6	16.48%
3	10.6	12.6	15.2	15.3	17.9	22.41%
4	16.2	19.8	24.2	24.4	27.1	18.82%
5	14.6	19.3	25.3	24.7	28.6	17.51%

* Source: Crime Analysis Analyst Database, Houston Police Department, August 2014

** Through September 30, 2014

*** The percentages do not add up to 100% for two reasons. First, 11% of calls are immediately handled over the phone by an officer (Priority Response Codes 6 & 7 – Table #2); and second, another 10.6% are handled by officers who on-view an incident before it becomes a call for service (Priority Response Code #8 – Table #2).

Observation:

Queue times for Priority Response Codes 3, 4, and 5 have increased notably during CY 2014. This represents 58.7% of the overall total dispatched calls. Policy protocols are in place governing how a call is to be treated if a call approaches the maximum allowable queue time (i.e., assign a call to a supervisor), but this is not an appropriate long-term tactic.

If queue times continue to escalate and existing policy is insufficient to correct the trend, other types of staffing adjustments will need to occur. These adjustments will have a debilitating effect on the HPD's capacity to provide other services. To coin a phrase: "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul" is not an appropriate managerial option; but in the absence of additional staff, it may be the only viable alternative.

Given our understanding of queue time and its effect on overall response time, let's look at the data on how well the HPD is responding to citizens' requests for service, See Table #7.

Response Times to Dispatchable Calls*

Table #7

Priority Response Codes	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013	CY 2014**	Total Response Time Goal
E	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.5	5
1	4.4	4.6	4.9	5.0	5.0	6
2	8.7	9.2	9.8	9.6	9.8	10
3	16.6	18.9	22.0	22.1	24.8	23
4	25.0	28.7	34.0	34.2	36.8	28
5	23.0	28.2	35.0	34.4	38.4	35

* Source: Crime Analysis Analyst Database, Houston Police Department 2014

** Through September 30, 2014

Clearly, the HPD is struggling with response times for Priority Response Codes 3, 4, and 5; much of this can be attributed to queue delay. Surprisingly, travel times are relatively constant despite traffic congestion during rush hours. This is due in part to the number of officers allocated to respond to calls for service as opposed to being assigned to other non-call related divisions / units / squads. As more officers are deployed to handle calls, the more comprehensive the coverage, which results in minimal travel times.

The HPD does not restrict its analysis of response times to just the data contained in Table #7. As is the case with any statistical calculations involving averages, certain specificity is missed. Thus, it is imperative to ask the question: "How many calls were responded to in compliance with response time goals?" The data in Table #8 provides us with the answer.

Response Time Goal Compliance*

Table #8

Priority Response Code	Department Goals**	Percentage Compliance
E	Within 5 Minutes	93.99%
1	Within 6 Minutes	72.99%
2	Within 10 Minutes	81.46%
3	Within 23 Minutes	65.89%
4	Within 28 Minutes	59.56%
5	Within 35 Minutes	66.50%

* Source: Office of Planning, Houston Police Department, September 2014

** Queue time plus travel time equals HPD's response time goal

These percentages represent the actual portion of calls responded to within each of the stated goals. For example, for Priority Response Code #3, Table #7 data indicates the average response time was 25.3 minutes – averaging allows for a “smoothing effect.” However, Table #8 data reveals only 66.16% of Priority Response Code 3 calls had an officer respond within the intended goal of 23 minutes.

This refinement of response time analysis further validates the HPD’s difficulty of meeting its own set of response goals. The higher the volume of calls, as reflected for Priority Response Code calls #3, #4, and #5, the more trouble HPD is experiencing in complying with response time goals.

Service Time: The final component of this core service is monitoring “service” times. Service time is defined as time from when an officer arrives at a caller’s address to the time an officer leaves the address and announces eligibility to receive another call. Over the past several years, service times have been relatively stable, See Table #9.

Service Times – Expressed in Minutes

Table #9*

Priority Response Codes	CY 2009	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013	CY 2014**
E	170.5	171.9	187.7	176.5	214.8	209.6
1	63.5	63.3	62.3	62.4	62.8	61.5
2	72.3	72.9	73.4	74.8	77.5	76.9
3	40.6	42.6	42.7	42.9	44.3	43.7
4	49.3	50.9	49.8	50.1	51.4	51.9
5	34.7	35.0	39.0	40.0	41.6	41.7

* Source: Crime Analysis Analyst Database, Houston Police Department

** Through September 30, 2014

Observations:

- A. Priority Response Code E calls represent only .11% of the call volume (see Table #6 and typically consists of extremely complex scenes (e.g., officer involved shootings, officer injuries, murders, violent in-progress calls) – so we expect officers to not be available to respond to calls for lengthy time periods.

- B. Service times for all priority response code calls have been relatively flat for 2014 and 2013 after a slight increase from 2012. These increases can be attributed to:
- 1) Spending more quality time with complainants and victims;
 - 2) Conducting preliminary investigations; and
 - 3) Completing paperwork that requires accounting for actions taken (e.g., use of force form, racial profiling form for traffic stops); and when appropriate, time spent transporting and filing charges on arrested suspects.

There are no standards governing service times as each call and associated situation is different. What management wants to guard against is excessive time spent on any given call to the detriment of not being available for other calls or their responsibility to perform other expected duties.

The ability to respond to the volume of calls generated by citizens dispersed across 600+ square miles of city limits; and, within acceptable response time goals requires a huge commitment of patrol officers. Currently, the HPD is struggling to maintain compliance with 2-officer responses and response times for Priority Response Code 3, 4, and 5 calls.

2. Core Service: Preventing Crime

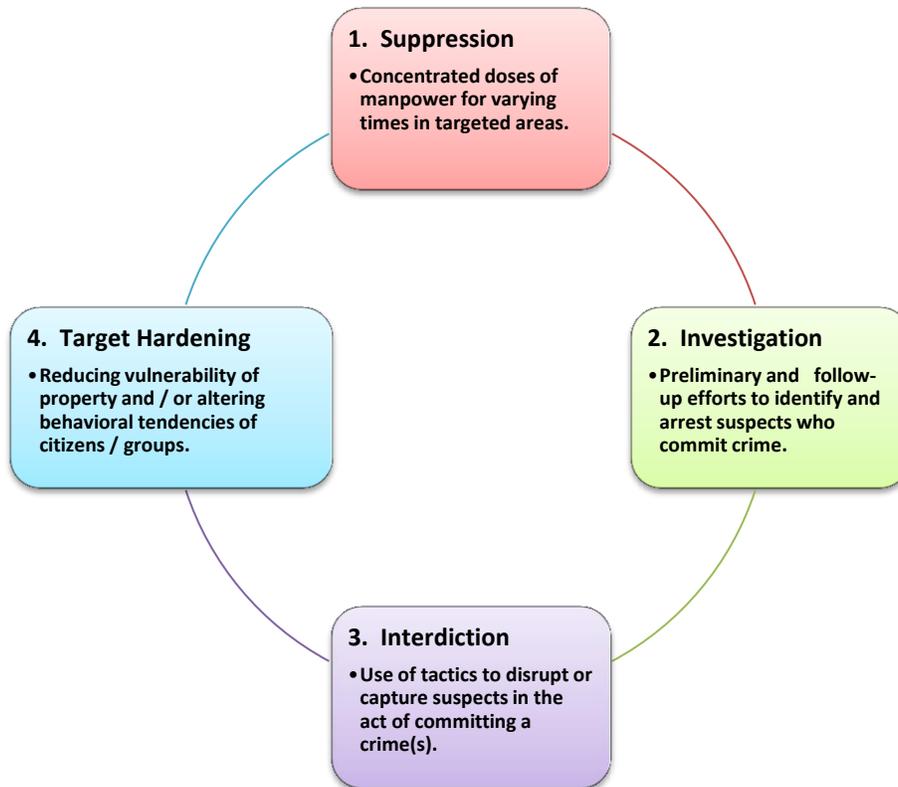
Conceptually, preventing crime requires action designed to reduce opportunities for crime to occur; and, to deter criminals from successfully committing a crime(s). Crime prevention is the purview of both the police and citizens. In many instances involving the commission of property crimes, success is predicated more on citizens altering their behavior, than expecting the police to “throw a blanket of protection” over each and every neighborhood.

This in no way de-obligates the responsibility of the police to lead crime prevention efforts, but citizens must be active partners with them if long-term success is to be achieved and maintained.

From conceptual and operational perspectives, crime prevention consists of four distinct but related functional strategies (See Figure #3 below):

Functional Strategies to Prevent Crime

Figure #3



For maximum effectiveness, attendant responsibilities associated with each strategy should be coordinated not only among police entities, but when appropriate, also with citizens. The degree of coordination is based to a large extent on the type of crime(s) one is trying to prevent.

Whereas the HPD routinely implements these strategies; the real issue is the breadth and depth with which this can be done.

In other words, the question of how long these efforts can be sustained is directly linked to manpower availability and the volume and complexity of the crime in question.

Before discussing how crime is addressed by the HPD, let's examine the Part I Uniform Crime Report (UCR)¹¹ crime activity for the past few years – See Table #10.

¹¹ Part I crimes are defined as: Violent – Murder, Sexual Assault, Robbery, Aggravated Assault and Non-Violent – Burglary, Theft, and Auto Theft.

**UCR – Part I Crime in Houston
Table #10***

Crime Type	CY 2009	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013
Murder	292	269	198	217	214
Rape	823	712	771	665	618
Robbery	11,367	9,449	8,054	9,385	9,891
Aggravated Assault	13,118	12,061	11,869	11,343	10,270
Total Violent	25,600	22,491	20,892	21,610	20,993
Burglary	29,279	27,924	27,459	26,630	23,733
Theft	77,058	74,581	68,596	67,978	73,591
Auto Theft	14,596	12,816	12,281	13,070	13,595
Total Non-Violent	120,933	114,321	108,336	107,678	110,919
Total Part I Crimes	146,533	137,812	129,228	129,288	131,912

* Source: Office of Planning, Houston Police Department, December 2013

From a general perspective, the overall trend lines are moving downward, with a slight uptick in non-violent crimes in 2013. It should also be noted; the overall crime rate (percentage increase / decrease) each year is largely dependent upon the number of non-violent crimes – theft in particular has typically fluctuated between 67,000 and 77,000 each year from CY 2009 – 2013.¹²

Observations:

- A. Burglaries and thefts drive the total percentage of increase or decrease in annual crime rates in Houston. This places immense pressure on the Burglary and Theft and Auto Theft Divisions¹³. Ironically, the ratio of workable versus non-workable theft cases (regardless of which division is responsible) leans heavily in favor of non-workable cases – there simply are too many cases without sufficient clues to work.¹⁴

¹² For CY 2013, the HPD recorded a total of 36,557 incidents of burglary of a motor vehicle and theft from a motor vehicle (this statistic is a part of the Theft count). These crimes have a very low probability of being solved; have the most significant impact on the city’s crime rate; and can easily be reduced if citizens would alter their behavior.

¹³ The Auto Theft Division is responsible for investigating burglaries of motor vehicles and thefts from motor vehicles in addition to auto thefts.

¹⁴ This further justifies the need for additional manpower to increase a commitment to collaborate with citizens to target harden property and convince people to alter their behavior as it relates to their vulnerability of becoming a victim.

- B. Violent crimes, while much lower in number, stimulate fear in a community. No one wants to be burglarized or lose his or her car or property; but it is an entirely different concern when it comes to being injured or killed! *The Homicide, Robbery, and Special Victims Divisions must have adequate staff to investigate and remove these suspects from our community.*

There is another “level” of crime occurring in Houston (and all other cities as well) that is tracked in accordance with UCR guidelines; it is referred to as “Part II” Crime (See Table #11):¹⁵

Part II Crime in Houston*
Table #11

Activity	CY 2009	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013	Five Year Average
Part II Crimes	128,451	120,911	114,956	110,392	109,592	116,604

* Source: Crime Analysis / Command Center Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

These crimes, while considered less serious in accordance with UCR standards, represent two important perspectives for Houston.

- A. *Many of these crimes are accounted for by virtue of actions taken by officers – some of which are in conjunction with handling calls; while others stem from an officer’s self-initiated efforts. Said differently, there are far more Part II crimes occurring in Houston than documented in Table #11. The ability to detect and act is directly linked to sufficiency of personnel.*
- B. While these crimes are less serious (defined in terms of loss and injury / death) than Part I crimes, they are still important to citizens – the primary difference being the degree of victimization one experiences. *In other words, no Houstonian wants to be victimized and they depend on the HPD to eliminate or at the very least reduce the probability of that happening to them.*

Each neighborhood within Houston can be profiled in terms of the amount and / or type of crime occurring within them.¹⁶ These differences (or similarities) necessitate distinctive strategic and / or tactical responses from the HPD. Thus, there is a

¹⁵ For Part II crimes, the following categories are tracked: simple assault, arson, forgery / counterfeit, fraud, embezzlement, stolen property, vandalism, weapons, vice, other sex, drugs, gambling, offenses against family / children, D.W.I., liquor, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, negligent manslaughter, other – not traffic.

¹⁶ Years ago under the leadership of Police Chief Lee P. Brown, steps were taken to realign the department’s beat and district boundary system to preserve neighborhood affinities. Crime Analysis personnel have the ability to identify 503 neighborhoods within Houston each possessing unique or commonly shared characteristics.

requirement services be oriented toward needs of citizens residing in and visiting diverse neighborhoods throughout Houston.¹⁷

Personnel assigned to Field Operations (Patrol) and Investigative Operations (Investigations) shoulder the bulk of responsibility for addressing neighborhood needs (or work demands), especially as it relates to preventing crime. Each of these operations will be addressed separately.

Patrol Operations:

Although the patrol force contains a majority of HPD's personnel, it is tasked with responding to a wide array of diverse work demands. The challenge for management is sufficiently meeting expectations that all work demands will be handled with equal vigor, effectiveness, and efficiency. The HPD's ability to do so is affected by the following variables:

- A. Time and information are the two critical variables for any patrol force. How much time do officers have to perform work? What type of information guides the type of work officers perform? Equally important is the manner in which time and information utilization is identified, analyzed, and acted upon (collectively managed).¹⁸
- B. A significant portion of officers in the patrol force are assigned to respond to calls.
- C. A smaller portion of the patrol force are assigned to special units, which for purposes of this discussion, means they are not responsible for responding to calls for service. These special assignments include tact teams, differential response teams (DRT), special traffic units, hot spot units, etc.

1) *These units are critical to addressing crime and disorder in neighborhoods due to their specialization and versatility. Noticeable gains in outcomes will occur with an infusion of staff for these units.*

¹⁷ The importance of neighborhoods cannot be underestimated. Neighborhoods are typically defined in terms of shared geographical locations and shared social networks. One typically describes neighborhoods from a residential perspective. Houston, like other large municipalities has a variety of different residential neighborhoods: single family residential; multi-family residential; a mix of single and multi-family residential. However, one must also recognize business neighborhoods and demands they place on police departments. These entities range from large shopping centers to a collection of strip centers to different configurations of corporate businesses. Lastly, while not classified per se as a neighborhood, there are "pockets of space" not necessarily affiliated with a neighborhood yet require police attention (e.g., large green spaces (bayous), parks, abandoned or vacant properties, etc.). *This concentration on servicing neighborhoods became one of the underlying tenets of HPD's commitment to the philosophy of Neighborhood-Oriented Policing.*

¹⁸ The acquisition of time is the outcome of successfully managing calls for service – this is why this component of police work is so important.

D. When not responding to calls, officers are expected to interdict crime using a variety of different tactics – general visibility patrols, directed patrols in high crime neighborhoods, and self-initiated activities (all proactive efforts) to name just a few.

1) Visibility is major concern among citizens – they want to see officers in their neighborhoods. This provides them with a sense of security principally through the belief officers are deterring crime. Deterrence can be measured in terms of the absence of crime in a given location over a definitive period of time. The only drawback is not being able to establish a “cause and effect” relationship. No one can really be sure the absence of crime is solely due to the visibility of the police. Providing ample visibility is not without its drawbacks.

a) *First and foremost, the HPD does not have sufficient manpower to routinely and comprehensively maintain visibility consistently across multiple neighborhoods.*¹⁹

b) To be effective, this responsibility must be implemented randomly. It is the unpredictability that affects deterrence.

c) Only certain types of crime (e.g., burglary of motor vehicles, thefts, street level narcotics transactions, etc.) tend to be affected by random, visibility patrols. However, this does not negate officers interdicting any type of crime at any time.

d) Visibility patrols should not be confused with directed patrols. Directed patrols can be effective with short-term problems; those caused by one or two active offenders. The intent is to interdict the activity and / or arrest the offender. The use of this tactic is typically limited to what a one-officer unit can do (which is directly related to staffing deficiencies).

Thus, directed patrols have a limited affect against a seemingly limited supply of offenders or recurring problems. Experience would suggest that crime patterns arising from conditions characterized by 1) the availability of criminal opportunities, 2) a lack of community watchfulness, and 3) the presence of vulnerable victims are best handled by

¹⁹ This was one of the primary variables noted in the PERF / Justex Report expressed in terms of officer presence on major thoroughfares and residential streets during an officer’s shift. As one increases visibility time, the number of officers needed increases significantly.

cooperative efforts by the police, the public, and other public and private organizations.

This is not to minimize the value of visibility, as it has inherent value as a means of suppressing and displacing crime. On the one hand it is an attractive tactic because it can be done by one-officer units; on the other hand, because of insufficient staffing, its reliance by supervisors and managers inhibits their willingness to use other tactics which could be more effective in high crime areas.

- 2) If during the course of their shift, officers encounter and arrest a person suspected of committing a crime; they will no longer be available to respond to calls for service for a period of time.
 - a) For each of these instances, officers' conduct a preliminary investigation and are required to document their findings in incident reports; and when fortunate enough to arrest suspects at a scene; take him / her to jail and file all the necessary paperwork (all reactive efforts). The same is true if an officer observes a criminal act while not handling calls.
 - b) The type and sophistication of the crime and ensuing arrest determines how much time an officer will be "out of service" unavailable to perform other duties. This amount of time can easily range from 2 – 3 hours.
 - c) The ability to reduce this time is important and lends credence to the value the new Records Management System (RMS) will have in helping expedite the processing of officers' paperwork requirements.
 - 3) *As efforts to identify and arrest suspects by patrol officers (assigned to respond to calls) increases, the ability to respond to calls for service in a timely manner decreases. Either more officers need to be assigned to responding to calls to compensate for this imbalance; or, more officers need to be assigned to special crime interdiction units whose officers are not responsible for responding to calls.*
- E. Crime is not the only responsibility patrol officers are expected to perform. They are also supposed to enforce traffic laws, address neighborhood disorder problems, and investigate crashes – all of which takes time.

Much can be said about effectively and efficiently managing the patrol work force and there is absolutely no discounting the importance of how this is accomplished. But

when “push comes to shove” unless an officer is handling an in-progress criminal event or has a suspect in-custody; their primary responsibility and obligation is to respond to citizens’ calls for service – irrespective of what type of service is being requested. Taking it a step further, this orientation pits response time expectations against crime reduction expectations.

Responding to calls takes valuable time and resources away from preventing crime. This is not a matter of acknowledging which responsibility is more important. Instead, this is all about having sufficient resources to perform all responsibilities with equal effectiveness.

Investigative Operations:

The PERF / Justex Report caught a lot of citizens’ attention when they announced the HPD was not investigating upwards of 20,000 cases with solvability factors during the past year. Those cases involved crashes, assaults and thefts. The common theme among these divisions was the lack of sufficient manpower to perform the work.

Some citizens wondered if this was a one-time occurrence or does this happen consistently from one year to the next. This is not uncommon within the HPD; but there is a caveat. Investigative personnel review all preliminary reports routed to their respective divisions. All 20,000 cases not worked at the time of assessment by PERF and Justex were in the process of being or had been reviewed to determine workability.

Unfortunately, decisions are made not to investigate certain types of cases each year. In almost every instance, these cases involve minor offenses. That typically does not set well with the victim(s), but the HPD has only so many investigative resources it can dedicate to investigative follow-up duties; and the more serious the offense, the more attention it will receive. This is the inequity brought about by not having sufficient staff to investigate all eligible cases thoroughly.

The HPD has 12 investigative divisions, all of which are responsible for addressing crime from two primary perspectives – reactive follow-up investigative work and proactive, undercover interdiction work. Thus, the HPD has organized investigative work in accordance with specific missions.

For example, the HPD has six reactive investigative divisions working under the auspices of the Criminal Investigations Command (Figure #4):

**Criminal Investigations Command
Figure #4**



The bulk of work performed within these divisions is investigative follow-up, with a *significant emphasis placed on the reactive investigation of UCR Part I crimes*. There are a number of salient issues that influence staffing levels within these divisions:

- A. The source for a majority of follow-up investigative work comes from patrol officers; however, there are instances when investigative personnel will respond to the scene of an incident (i.e., homicides) and handle it minimizing a patrol officer's time commitment.
- B. The effectiveness of an investigator's efforts is directly linked to the quality of information contained within a patrol officer's preliminary investigation report.
- C. The quality of the information within an officer's investigative report is dependent upon the type of information about the criminal offense provided by victims, complainants, and witnesses to the patrol officer. *This is the key to ultimately solving a crime; either one shares information, which could be construed to be a clue(s) or they cannot or will not (for whatever reason)*. Clues or leads are referred to as "solvability factors" and their presence or lack thereof has a tremendous effect on case clearances, which will be discussed below.
- D. *Every preliminary criminal investigation report is reviewed by investigative personnel to determine if further follow-up work is warranted.*
- E. Not every criminal case is subjected to a follow-up investigation. Reasons include: no clues exist for an investigator to work; a complainant refuses to cooperate; or *there is insufficient manpower available to work a case with leads*.
 - 1) Just because a case has a solvability factor(s) is no assurance there will be a successful resolution. The presence of forensic physical evidence typically is more powerful (in resolving a case) than eyewitness accounts; but again, this is directly linked to the type of crime in question.

- 2) The predominant indicant of measuring success for investigative divisions is case clearances. However, cases clearance rates can be extremely misleading.
- 3) The HPD adheres to the case clearance standards promulgated by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).²⁰ The HPD's clearance rates for the past few years are displayed in Table #12:

HPD Clearance Rates

Table #12*

Crime Type	CY 2009	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013
Murder	69.5%	86.6%	89.4%	70.0%	75.7%
Rape	45.2%	52.8%	50.7%	46.8%	44.2%
Robbery	23.8%	26.0%	26.2%	22.1%	21.1%
Aggravated Assault	48.4%	56.3%	57.7%	52.7%	51.7%
Total Violent	37.6%	43.9%	45.6%	39.4%	37.3%
Burglary	7.9%	8.5%	8.1%	7.7%	7.6%
Theft	14.0%	15.0%	15.6%	14.5%	13.1%
Auto Theft	7.4%	6.9%	6.1%	5.6%	6.1%
Total Non-Violent	11.7%	12.5%	12.6%	11.7%	11.1%
Total Part I Crimes	16.3%	17.6%	18.0%	16.4%	15.2%

* Source: Office of Planning, Houston Police Department, December 2013

- 4) *Case clearance computations require the inclusion of all criminal cases regardless of an agency's ability to solve any of them. The reason case clearance rates are so low for property crimes is because a vast majority of these cases have absolutely no workable solvability factors. And yet, as is required by the UCR guidelines, the Department is held accountable for not solving them.*
 - a. Unworkable cases should not go unattended just because there are no solvability factors to pursue. These types of

²⁰<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr>

cases require more coactive efforts between citizens and police to either target harden property or by altering citizen behavior to minimize victimization.

- b. *The department does not have the necessary personnel to mount and maintain an adequate prevention campaign.*²¹

*As noted within the PERF / Justex Report, the HPD does not have a sufficient number of officers to investigate the volume of workable cases within divisions assigned to the Criminal Investigations Command. Furthermore, the Report alluded to the need for additional manpower to increase the intensity of work for specific types of cases.*²²

The second compilation of investigative divisions within the HPD is assigned to the Special Investigations Command (Figure #5):

**Special Investigations Command
Figure #5**



Collectively, these divisions perform the following types of work: reactive criminal investigations, traffic investigations, proactive undercover investigations, and uniform criminal interdiction.

A number of significant observations about the nature of their work are also in order:

- A. PERF and Justex were correct in their acknowledgement that staffing projections for the Major Offenders, Narcotics, Vice, and to a lesser extent

²¹ This is not to suggest the HPD does not have crime prevention literature along with access to social media outlets and existing citizen groups with which to distribute this material. The department's orientation has been reactive i.e., provide literature to those who request it. This is quite different from providing each and every victim with material and / or follow-up visits to assess and recommend action going forward. The police do not extend themselves along these lines because they assume victims will automatically target harden or alter their behavior without intervention from the police. This assumes citizens have an interest to adjust or know how to adjust, which is not always the case. This needed change should not be left up to chance, but should become a part of the service extended to citizens – but this requires additional manpower.

²² Volume refers the number of cases eligible to be worked; whereas intensity refers to the amount of time a specific type of case may require for successful closure. Intensity of effort is directly linked to the complexity of a case and the presence of various types of solvability factors.

Auto Theft Divisions are extremely difficult to ascertain.²³ What we do know is:

- 1) The type of crime addressed by these Divisions is pretty complex. In many instances investigators are confronted with tackling sophisticated criminal enterprises involving intricate, organized activities. Complex serial crimes committed by a particularly effective criminal or a group of criminals represent another challenge.

These types of incidents require extensive time and manpower to address. The HPD has only so many people it can assign directly or indirectly via Task Force participation to identify and address problems. Unfortunately, there is more work for these divisions to perform than HPD has people available to do so.

- 2) The probability of this type of criminal activity expanding is high. For example, with a concerted emphasis now being placed on human trafficking, particularly by Vice Division personnel, one can reasonably expect more of this activity to surface within Houston – eventually necessitating the need for more personnel.
- 3) Citizen tolerance for lack of sufficient attention to the type of criminal behavior handled by these divisions will escalate if not addressed convincingly.
- 4) *It is unreasonable to assume the HPD can eliminate this type of criminal behavior; but it can be more responsive and productive with additional personnel.*

- B. Gang Activity: is frequently mentioned by citizens as cause for alarm and is responsible for stimulating fear and unrest within and amongst neighborhoods. The Gang Division is responsible for identifying the prevalence of gangs in Houston, growth in gang memberships; and growth in gang activity – See Tables #13 - #16:

²³ For purposes of clarification, personnel in the Major Offenders Division are responsible for special theft crimes; investigating and arresting targeted offenders (career criminals, fugitives, violent offenders, parole violators), and participating in Inter-Agency Task Forces, which investigate crimes that affect Houston and surrounding jurisdictions. Members of the Vice Division concentrate on gambling, liquor violations, prostitution, sexual oriented businesses and human trafficking. The Auto Theft Division members focus their investigations on auto thefts; burglary of motor vehicles; and thefts from motor vehicles. The Narcotics Division's mission is self-evident.

Gangs, Members, and Incidents*

Table #13

Year	Number of Gangs	Number of Gang Members	Number of Incidents
2009	224	11,591	6,433
2010	260	15,139	6,801
2011	287	18,159	7,371
2012	295	19,998	7,690
2013	320	20,511	7,473

* Source: Gang Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

Gang Member Ethnicity*

Table #14

Ethnicity	CY 2009	CY 2010	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013
Hispanic	5,564	6,964	7,928	8,333	8,117
Black	5,332	6,813	8,508	9,669	10,280
Other	695	1,362	1,723	1,996	2,114
Totals:	11,591	15,139	18,159	19,998	20,511

* Source: Gang Division, Houston Police Department August 2014

Gang Member Arrests*

Table #15

Year	Number of Arrests
2009	3,562
2010	3,209
2011	3,344
2012	5,439
2013	4,742

* Source: Gang Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

Top 10 Gang Arrests by Offense*
2009 – 2013
Table #16

Type of Offense	Number of Arrests
Possession of Controlled Substance	3,111
Possession of Marijuana	2,930
Assault	1,299
Criminal Trespass	1,272
Theft - Over \$50.00	1,063
Aggravated Robbery	744
Evading	725
Fugitive	702
Burglary - Habitation	662
Felon in Possession of a Firearm	662

* Source: Gang Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

The proliferation of gang membership and activity continues on an upward trend. It is important to note, the HPD is not in a position to know, at this point in time, how many gangs or gang members actually exist in Houston. The data contained in these Tables is dependent on self-reporting by citizens and officers. What is troublesome is what we do not know about gang activity occurring in our city.

- 1) *Drug possession and violence are two predominant characteristics of gang related crime.*
- 2) *The prevalence of criminal gang activity represents another special type of work demand vying for attention by the HPD. The Department's ability to devote adequate resources is tempered by other types of service requests.*
- 3) *According the HPD's last two citizen satisfaction surveys (2010 and 2012), citizens registered a 56% satisfaction rate with how the department is handling gang activities.²⁴*

C. **Narcotic Activity:** it is hard to say just how large the narcotics problem is in Houston. While national and local attention is focused on how marijuana possession will be legally classified and how those who possess certain

²⁴ "Sam Houston State University - Houston Police Department Citizen Contact-Impression Survey," Table 2.1-1, p. 32, Houston Police Department, 2012.

amounts will be handled; it should not detract from the much larger issue of how hard core drug markets, manufacturing, and distribution practices affect the safety of Houstonians.²⁵

The HPD’s efforts have focused on disrupting and dismantling Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs).²⁶ This occurs by virtue of Houston’s participation in federally sponsored High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) initiatives. The Narcotics Division participates in 5 of those initiatives in Houston’s region; serving as the lead in 2 initiatives and as support in 3 other initiatives. A sample of their activities and results are shown in Tables #17 and #18:

Narcotics Division Production*

Table #17

Year	Currency Seized	Total Grams Narcotics***	Street Value Narcotics	Vehicles Seized	Other Property Seized	Suspects Arrested	Investigations
2009	\$18,050,208	40,642,468	\$296,320,413	168	82	4,368	4,037
2010	\$17,554,803	33,845,088	\$261,433,868	123	45	4,094	3,715
2011	\$34,003,868	53,083,668	\$370,163,282	105	70	3,555	3,363
2012	\$24,701,512	24,848,975	\$275,730,113	83	11	3,446	3,376
2013	\$24,789,806	28,811,548	\$269,743,156	96	43	2,921	2,994
2014**	\$10,079,326	25,061,452	\$534,885,407				

* Source: Narcotics Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

** Data for January – June 2014

*** The bulk of the grams are attributed to marijuana seizures

²⁵There is a difference between 2 ounces of illegal marijuana and 200 or 2,000 pounds of illegal marijuana. Even if a decision is rendered allowing one to possess small quantities; most if not all production and distribution is illegal. This contributes to ongoing criminal enterprises and associated issues. Also, there is still considerable debate about marijuana being the number one gateway drug to harder more addictive drugs and its use in conjunction with other drugs or pills. Newer types of marijuana and derivatives are significantly more potent resulting in more overdoses and emergency room visits.

²⁶ Of the DTOs the HPD has contended with, the percentage of drugs distributed in and around Houston are: 53% marijuana, 62% cocaine, and 44 % methamphetamines. DTOs typically distribute more than one type of drug.

DTOs Dismantled / Disrupted*
Table #18

Year	HPD Lead Agency	HPD Support Agency	Totals
2009	22	67	89
2010	19	78	97
2011	23	96	119
2012	15	82	97
2013	27	77	104

* Source: Narcotics Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

While these numbers are substantial and impressive, they represent only a portion of illegal narcotics activity occurring in and around Houston. The Narcotics Division could easily support a doubling of their manpower; committing it to:

- 1) Expanded general enforcement squads to handle neighborhood complaints regarding open air drug activity, drug/crack houses, drug related violence and crime; plus responding more rapidly to evolving drug threats along with identifying-disrupting-dismantling drug operations and
- 2) Increased interdiction efforts regarding long-term regional, national, and international investigations to dismantle DTOs by interdicting narcotic activities and seizing assets by concentrating on bus stations, train stations, hotels / motels, highways, mail shipments as well as working private airfields, the Port of Houston, and waterways.

This is not to suggest the Narcotics Division has been ignoring all of these locations and activities; once again, it is all about intensity of effort, with more people more can be accomplished.

- D. The work performed by the members of the Vehicular Crimes Division will be discussed under Core Service #3.

Investigators play a critical role in preventing crime. They are entrusted with “catching criminals” by effectively and efficiently using a variety of investigative techniques. But investigative efforts take time and are based solely on the quality of information they have to work with. *What is unfortunate for the HPD is a noticeable lack of manpower to:*

- A. Properly investigate all cases in which clues exist that lead to a high probability of arrest;
- B. Spend sufficient time on cases that have a promise of being brought to a successful closure; and
- C. Sufficiently conduct complex undercover operations aimed at interdicting criminal enterprises.

3. **Core Service: Traffic Enforcement / Mobility**

Anyone familiar with Houston is well aware of its roadway network, which allows hundreds of thousands of drivers to navigate their way in and around the city 24/7/365. This places an enormous burden on the HPD with respect to enforcing traffic laws and facilitating traffic flow or mobility. There are few things as frustrating as sitting in traffic jams wondering why it is taking so long to fix whatever problem is causing the delay.

According to Tony Voigt, the cost of congestion in 2013 was \$864 million for the Houston area, which is up 36% from 2012 and up 57% from 2011. Voigt also states vehicle hours associated with congestion is up 12% in 2013 from 2012.²⁷

Mobility is an extremely difficult issue given Houston's 5,030 center lane miles of freeway²⁸ and approximately 16,000 lane miles of streets.²⁹ As the population of the city and surrounding area continues to grow; so too will the number of vehicles traversing Houston's roadways increase – thereby raising the probability of more crashes.

Unfortunately, the HPD has only two dedicated divisions, whose primary mission is to handle traffic violations, crashes, and mobility occurring on roadways: the Traffic Enforcement Division (TED) and the Vehicular Crime Division (VCD). Let's take a brief look at the work demands affecting these divisions.

Vehicular Crime Division: The primary mission of personnel assigned to the VCD is to investigate crashes. The Divisions consists of the following Units (See Figure #6):

**Vehicular Crimes Division
Figure #6**

**Crash Investigations (3 Shifts)
Crash Reconstruction Unit
Hit and Run Unit**

²⁷ "Houston Transtar 2013 Benefits Report," Tony Voigt, Research Engineer, Texas A&M Transportation Institute, August 6, 2014.

²⁸ Source: Interview with Mr. Michael Redmond, a Chief Transportation Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council.

²⁹ <http://www.publicworks.houstontx.gov/row/streetbranch.html>

As one might surmise, there are a variety of different types of crashes occurring throughout Houston.

The overall crash data for Houston during the last five years is presented in Table #19 below:

Houston Traffic Crashes*
Table #19

Year	Major Crashes	Minor Crashes	Total Crashes
2009	17,820	44,219	62,039
2010	13,518	40,063	53,581
2011	16,339	39,925	56,264
2012	18,027	45,812	63,839
2013	18,838	51,936	70,774

* Source: Vehicular Crimes Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

While 70,000+ crashes for 2013 require a huge commitment of resources. Citizens are generally not aware of the unique types of crashes contained within Table #19 and the corresponding work they require from the HPD.

Let's look at the types of special crash investigations currently being handled by personnel within the VCD. Each crash category (i.e., Fatality Crashes) total in Table #20 (see below) is included within each respective annual Total Crash column within Table #19:

Special Crash Investigations*
Table #20

Calendar Year	Fatality Crashes	Deaths	FSRA** Crashes	FSRA Assigned	FSGI*** Crashes	FSGI Assigned	DWI Crashes	HPD Crashes	HFD Crashes	Totals: (% of Annual Total)
2009	204	221	77	77	14,087	5,542	1,981	757	169	17,292 (28%)
2010	209	221	106	106	7,245	3,132	1,481	735	149	9,937 (18%)
2011	201	208	83	83	10,184	2,970	1,945	655	155	13,230 (23%)
2012	190	206	116	116	12,704	2,423	2,027	676	149	15,878 (25%)
2013	188	196	108	108	14,687	3,041 (21%)	1,996	681	192	17,860 (25%)
Avg. Totals with %	198	210 (106%)	98	98 (100%)	11,781	3,421 (29%)	1,886	700	162	73,707 (25%)

* Source: Vehicular Crimes Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014. The data for 2008-2010 was suspect due to vendor inadequacies. Appropriate changes were made resulting in the creation of a much more reliable database from that point forward.

** Failure to Stop and Render Aid

*** Failure to Stop and Give Information (no physical injuries, property damage only)

There are a number of important observations gleaned from Table #20:

- A. Minimally, 25% of total crashes occurring in Houston have a unique nature to them.³⁰ This percentage is largely attributed to the number of crashes where citizens failed to stop and give information.
- B. To the extent possible, VCD officers respond and thoroughly investigate all Fatality crashes, FSRA crashes, and HPD and HFD vehicular crashes.
- C. All FSGI crash scenes are subjected to a preliminary investigation at the scene of the incident, but only a small portion result in a follow-up investigation being done.
 - 1) All FSGI crash reports are screened to determine which cases merit a follow-up investigation. If solvability factors exist, the case will be assigned to an investigator. For 2009 – 2013, on average, this amounted

³⁰ This was determined by taking the number of Total Special Crashes for 2013 (Table #20) and dividing by the number of Total Crashes (Table #19) – 17,860/70,774 = 25%.

to 29% of the total cases being assigned for follow-up work (3,421 out of a total of 11,683).

2) *Although the number of crashes assigned for follow-up investigations is proportionally small, hundreds of cases sit in queue until investigators have time to add them to their case load. Furthermore, unless overtime is provided to compensate for lack of sufficient manpower, many of these cases would not be worked because the statute of limitations expires.*³¹

- D. All DWI crash scenes are investigated and in most instances involve considerable time processing suspects for placement in Jail.
- E. The volume of crash investigations conducted by VCD personnel is displayed in Table #21:

Crash Reports Completed by VCD Officers*

Table #21

Year	Number of Crash Reports
2009	5,048
2010	4,922
2011	4,905
2012	5,988
2013	6,389

* Source: Vehicular Crimes Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

This data is quite revealing in that, when compared to the overall number of crashes occurring in Houston during 2013 (70,744 – Table #19); the bulk of the work responding to and handling crash scenes is done by patrol officers.³²

*Because there are insufficient personnel within the Vehicular Crimes Division to handle the caseload; patrol officers will use valuable time responding to and investigating minor crash incidents.*³³

One would conclude from the aforementioned data that more emphasis must be placed on enforcement as one way to effect citizen behavior with the ultimate outcome being increased mobility on Houston’s roadway system.

³¹ Case assignment and investigation are driven by the presence of the following variables: damage is greater than \$1,000; suspect is identified; witnesses are accessible and willing; suspect’s license plate identified; and suspect’s registration information matches description of vehicle.

³² Whenever possible, officers will refer citizens who want a report on file to any one of the Department’s patrol divisions closest to the citizen’s place of residence.

³³ A “minor crash” is a label used to depict no injuries occurred at the scene of the crash.

Traffic Enforcement Division: Members of the TED are not solely responsible for enforcing traffic ordinances; once again, the bulk of that responsibility rests with patrol officers. The TED consists of four primary entities (Figure #7):

**Traffic Enforcement Division
Figure #7**

**Solo Motorcycle Unit
DWI Unit
Radar Unit
Truck Enforcement Unit**

Responsibility assignments for officers within these units are as follows:

- A. Solo Unit officers are usually assigned different segments of freeways to assist with mobility issues, which typically encompass assisting or handling crashes. A significant number of crashes occur on Houston’s highway network – See Table #22:

**Houston Highway Crash Summary*
Table #22**

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
IH 10	1,780	2,499	2,457	3,268	3,694
IH 45	3,257	4,027	4,299	5,370	6,205
IH 610	3,574	3,003	2,958	3,903	4,498
SH 225	22	96	122	163	173
SH 249	147	107	127	145	117
SH 288	3	439	470	598	706
SL 8**	2,207	1,079	978	1,491	1,744
US 290	886	733	852	1,113	1,163
US 59	3,526	2,679	2,746	3,782	4,196
Totals:	15,402	14,662	15,009	19,833	22,496

* Source: Vehicular Crimes Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

** SL 8: Official Highway Name for Sam Houston Parkway, TxDOT Nomenclature

It is unreasonable to believe this unit can adequately cover the entire freeway system 24/7/365; especially during peak rush hours. Because of their access (use of motorcycles), they have the unique ability to quickly respond and investigate crashes on highways. Steps should be taken to significantly upgrade this capability so officers can spend concentrated time on assigned freeway

segments rather than traverse from one segment to the next often times making it extremely difficult to return back to the scene of a highway crash.

SafeClear: The SafeClear Program, established in 2005, was designed to remove stalled vehicles from highways to alleviate rubber necking and secondary accidents both of which contribute to decreased mobility. This program served to supplement efforts by the HPD to keep highway traffic moving at a safe pace, especially during rush hours. The crash numbers on highways regulated by SafeClear tows are provided in Table #23:

Highway Crashes During SafeClear's Tenure*

Table #23

Year	Total Highway Crashes
2003	22,116
2004	18,682
2005	16,215
2006	15,182
2007	17,518
2008	11,095
2009	13,048
2010	13,476
2011	13,904
2012	18,197
2013	20,635

← SafeClear Instituted

* Source: Vehicular Crimes Division, Houston Police Department, August, 2014

As noted previously (Table #20 source note), the data for 2008 – 2010 is suspect as the HPD was experiencing problems with a vendor who was responsible for data entry. This has subsequently been fixed. Irrespective, the crash data clearly demonstrates a pronounced reduction in crashes beginning in 2005. However, note the increased trend beginning in 2010 up and through 2013. The crash volume has once again peaked at 20,000 per annum.³⁴

³⁴ It is interesting to note, citizens began paying for tows on July 1, 2011. During the time period the city was paying for the tows, the monthly number of tows averaged approximately 6,000. This activity has steadily declined to the current monthly status of approximately 1,700 – 1,900 (Source: Auto Dealers Unit, Houston Police Department, September 2014).

While there may be explanations for this increase (i.e., a higher number of vehicles on Houston’s highway system), the SafeClear Program should not be used to justify minimizing increased staffing to work Houston’s highway network.

Not surprisingly, the Solo Unit can only do so much given their staffing situation. Significantly increasing the capacity of this unit will have a direct effect on highway mobility in Houston.

- B. Truck Enforcement Unit officers are assigned to 1 of 4 quadrants³⁵ and conduct about 40% their stops on freeways and 60% on regular streets. They also conduct special sting operations where they pull all commercial vehicles in a certain area into a large parking lot to conduct safety inspections.

- C. DWI Task Force and Radar Unit officers are assigned to a certain area or segment of freeway unless they are working a special assignment (i.e., school zones) based on crash data received from VCD and input from patrol personnel and / or citizens.

A glimpse of production from these units over the past five years is insightful (See Tables #24 - #28):

DWI Task Force Production*

Table #24

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Reports	3,463	2,876	2,545	2,852	3,162
Citations	4,668	5,455	6,790	4,892	1,353**
Arrests	7,286	6,310	5,186	5,633	6,331

** Emphasis changed from issuing citations to arresting DWI suspects.

Truck Enforcement Unit Production*

Table #25

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Reports	285	219	174	223	193
Citations	9,774	11,852	12,395	13,163	10,937
Arrests	372	178	206	208	125
Truck Checks	10,962	12,156	12,913	12,850	11,274

³⁵ The term “quadrant” is used to describe the effect of I-45 (north / south) intersecting with I-10 (east / west) thus creating four quadrants of the city.

Traffic Enforcement Unit Production*

Table #26

(Includes overtime citation / arrest production for 2013 only)

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Reports	1,019	770	453	398	380
Citations	81,437	78,895	91,153	73,425	130,422
Arrests	7,510	6,668	4,868	3,811	7,281

Solo Motorcycle Unit Production*

Table #27

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Reports	3,022	1,894	1,679	1,347	1,505
Citations	25,566	47,069	66,292	59,565	56,330
Arrests	196	131	61	36	63

Highway Interdiction Unit Production*

Table #28

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Reports	152	108	171	180	232
Citations	1,668	2,586	1,806	2,155	1,474
Arrests	375	617	769	537	897
Cocaine Recovered (Grams)	6.1	62.49	50,107	64,915	41,374
Marijuana Recovered (Lbs.)	11,321	12,278	10,710	6,817	2,551
Other Drugs Recovered (Dosage Units)	31,004	4,010	1,075	80,452	17,044

* Source: Traffic Enforcement Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

Observations:

- A. For CY 2013, the 111 personnel assigned to the TED units wrote 200,516, which represented 57.7% of the total citations written for the year.³⁶

³⁶ According to a Municipal Court report: "Traffic and Non-Traffic Citations and Violations Issued by HPD," August, 2014, the HPD generated a total of 347,508 citations for CY 2013.

- B. While it is easier to ask the question, why are patrol officers not writing more tickets; *the more germane question should be what would happen if HPD had more officers assigned to work highways and major thoroughfares?*³⁷

Despite the current level of effort, additional personnel will produce more outputs with a corresponding effect of reducing crashes and increasing mobility:

- A. Is there any doubt more arrests for DWI / DUI will reduce the probability of crashes?
- B. How comfortable are we that trucks driving through Houston are in need of more attention – not to necessarily punish but to ensure adequate safety?
- C. If one believes traffic citations can be linked directly to the prevention of crashes (and subsequently injuries and deaths), should more officers be solely assigned this responsibility?
- D. Given this city's Port stature, along with perceived anonymity that comes with a large highway system, how comfortable are we that sufficient resources are being spent minimizing drug transports through Houston?

These are but a few examples of how additional manpower can be used just to address this particular core responsibility.

4. Core Service: Regulatory Enforcement

One might not automatically make the linkage between regulatory enforcement and crime prevention. To the contrary, most regulatory ordinances (with a law enforcement nexus) spawn from the threat of criminal activity or are in response to the emergence of criminal activity. In either instance, the intent of any regulatory ordinance and the ensuing activity by the police department (if the ordinance is to be regulated by the HPD) is to *prevent criminal activity by increasing accountability*.

The HPD has several Units or Details whose sole responsibility is to monitor activities occurring within certain businesses as well as account for the registration of certain violators. These responsibilities are described in Table #29:

³⁷ When any officer writes citations they are subject to attending court. Invariably, time spent in court is less time spent in neighborhoods. That is not to say patrol officers should not be mindful of reacting to traffic violations, but their time is arguably better spent addressing neighborhood crime and disorder issues / problems. It would be far wiser to increase manpower to exclusively handle traffic and mobility problems, which according to the most recent Kleinberg study at Rice University, represents citizens' most pressing concern.

Regulatory Responsibilities*

Table #29

Unit / Detail, Division	Description of Responsibilities
1. Metal Theft Unit, Burglary & Theft Division	Regulates the scrap metal business
2. Pawn Detail, Burglary & Theft Division	Regulates pawn shops
3. Alarm Detail, Burglary & Theft Division	Regulates operation of burglar and hold up alarms
4. Sex Offender Detail, Juvenile Division	Registration and compliance of sex offenders
5. Auto Dealers Unit, Auto Theft Division	Regulates auto dealers and towing industry
6. Safe Clear Detail, Auto Theft Division	Regulates the Safe Clear Program
7. Apartment Security Unit, Field Operations	Regulates apartment community security commitment
8. Boarding Home Enforcement Squad, Mental Health Division	Regulates boarding homes
9. Extra Employment Unit, Inspections Division	Regulates the process governing extra jobs
10. Criminal Justice Information System Unit, Inspections Division	Regulates HPD compliance with Federal Criminal Justice Information Standards

* Source: Houston Police Department, August 2014

On its face, these responsibilities do not represent the volume of work associated with the other core services. However, these are important responsibilities necessitating a commitment of manpower – civilian (13) and classified (64). Equally as important is the future anticipated growth of these responsibilities.

Each of these entities will experience pressure to increase their regulatory responsibilities because these businesses or activities will increase over time. Furthermore, one can anticipate further demands for additional regulation if and when a nexus occurs between a certain type of business and criminal activity unique to those businesses.³⁸

5. **Core Service – Homeland Security (HLS)**

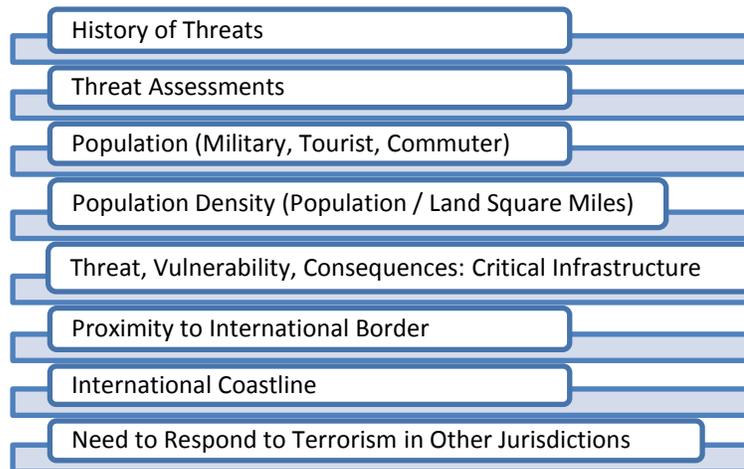
Ever since the unforgettable days of 9/11, the United States has constantly struggled with the issue of protecting the homeland from terroristic attacks. Not surprisingly, the Houston region ranks in the top six of most attractive targets in our Country as determined by the Department of Homeland Security.

³⁸ Current efforts are underway to re-examine how “alternative housing facilities” will be regulated in Houston. These facilities (businesses) house parolees released from the Texas Department of Corrections.

This ranking comes from the application of a sophisticated formula that includes the following risk factors:

Homeland Security Threat Variables

Figure #8



Although Houston has been extremely fortunate not to have experienced the trauma of a terror event, it does not lessen the vigilance placed on the HPD.

The Houston Ship Channel is the number one Critical Infrastructure in the Houston Region and yet HPD is currently only protecting it on a limited overtime basis in partnership with members of the Harris County Sheriff's Office. Grant overtime funding for personnel ended the last day of August 2014.

The entire length of the Ship Channel Security Zone is inside the city limits of Houston. While dockside along the channel belongs to different jurisdictions, the waterway is belongs to the Houston.

Why should the HPD be so concerned about the Ship Channel? A closure of the channel results in economic losses of \$12-16 million per hour; greater than any other event in the entire region. A 2012 study showed that ship channel related jobs in Texas number over one million and the statewide economic impact is \$178.5 billion annually.³⁹

The HPD has boats, aircraft, vehicles, radios, mobile digital computers and a very long list of other items that have been purchased with Department of Homeland

³⁹ "The Local and Regional Economic Impacts of the Port of Houston, 2011," prepared by Marin Associates, 941 Wheatland Ave., Suite 203, Lancaster, PA 17603; prepared for the Port of Houston Authority, May 22, 2012.

Security's Port Security Grant dollars. Additionally, the Houston Ship Channel Security District has agreed to pay for all fuel and maintenance cost for boats and all fuel cost for helicopters used to patrol the port region. The city of Houston currently has grants that cover the maintenance cost for the aircraft through August 2016. *The only thing not covered after August 31, 2014 is HPD personnel.*

The question then remains – what should the HPD be doing to further support regional HLS needs:

- A. A fulltime (40 hours a week) presence in the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Sector Houston Command Center is needed. Coast Guard representatives have made this request for several years now and even designed space in their new building for HPD personnel. Ideally, this position would be staffed using personnel from the Fusion Center or CID – both of whom have people with security clearance. This position could also network with other Port partners to help coordinate information exchange from an intelligence side of the house.
- B. Continue waterside patrols of high-risk targets and ship movements with an appropriate number of personnel.
- C. Increases in the HPD's capacity to fly over Houston's critical infrastructure and key resource storage locations should be made.
- D. We should continue the regular over-flights of the Port region; and when possible, expand the frequency of these flights. Given the large number of small side roads and water tributaries, aerial patrol is a very cost effective method to monitor them. The airborne patrols have also been very popular with the Houston Ship Channel Security District members and will only help in securing additional funding for other HPD efforts in the future.
- E. Efforts must be taken to routinely monitor locations that are storing / using radiological material.
 - 1) While this is no easy process, steps are being taken to acquire detection equipment and prepare training for HPD personnel.
- F. Establish the capacity to update CAD to show "critical infrastructure / key resource locations and educate patrol on why a "proper" response is important at these locations. Identify all locations that store/use radiological materials.
- G. Develop the capacity to detect radiological materials moving on the streets of Houston.

- H. The HPD should increase capabilities to conduct regular (and random) patrol checks of critical infrastructure locations throughout the city (i.e., water sources).

The more Houston can legitimately project preparedness against terrorist acts; the less likely an event will occur within our city (and hopefully the surrounding region).

This should not be a situation in which we again, require patrol officers to absorb additional responsibilities taking them away from performing core services within assigned neighborhoods. The HPD should have a dedicated team of specialists (civilians and / or classifieds) whose sole responsibility is to invest in protecting Houston from this type of harm.

Because no significant HLS incident has occurred in Houston (or the region) it is easy to see how citizens can be lulled into a sense of complacency. The HPD cannot afford that posture; it must remain vigilant to the prospect that the Houston region is an attractive target for many reasons, chief among them being the energy capital of the United States. Successful attacks could have a crippling effect on the Country's economic engine and the ensuing trickle down effects such a loss incurs on citizens' quality of life.

Officials have been responsive since the events of 9/11 and continue to work hard to minimize opportunities for terroristic acts. However, the simple truth is this requires a long-term commitment. Government officials must always be mindful of the needs of the HPD and the Houston Fire Department is performing these responsibilities.

In closing, these five core competencies do not represent all of the work performed by members of the HPD; but they collectively account for a large portion of services provided to citizens. The data presented in this Section was intended to illustrate the scope of certain types of work demands and the challenges they present to the HPD.

The activity indicators are not meant to be the sole means of production where one can gauge accomplishments. Activity indicators historically represent outputs for any business, private or public sector, and should not be confused with outcomes – or the effects of one's efforts. As outputs ebb and flow, one must determine how this affects intended results. If outputs indicators develop a declining trend, then management must identify causes and act accordingly.

Providing core services to Houstonians is a tremendous challenge. Each core service has its own characteristics, scope, and breadth of work; and as our population flourishes, service demands will also expand and become more competitive. Just maintaining current staffing levels in lieu of Houston's continued prosperity will ultimately diminish the HPD's capacity to provide sufficient and timely quality of service to an ever expanding populace.

Section Three **The Relationship between Technology and Staffing**

The purpose of this Section is to briefly describe the relationship between technology and its effect on staffing within police agencies. It is not the intent to profile all technological applications being used within the HPD, as there are many; but to focus only on major systemic adaptations such as Computer-aided Dispatch Systems (CADs), Records Management Systems (RMS), and Video Systems (e.g., car cameras, body cameras, red light cameras and automatic license plate readers). These types of technological advancements have provided two invaluable contributions to police agencies over the years.

First, when initially adopted, these systems in whole or in part, minimized to some degree the need to hire additional personnel. Second, they have improved an agency's capacity to immediately access and analyze large volumes of data, which facilitates decision-making resulting in more efficient use of time.

When one discusses how technology effects agency staffing, it is usually done in terms of its impact on an organization as a "force multiplier." *The phrase "force multiplier" can best be described as a capacity to increase the effectiveness of a force without actually increasing the number of people within an organization.* This can be accomplished by using different strategies, such as: altering, specializing, or increasing the intensity of training; by acquiring and using more effective equipment; and by implementing certain types of technology. The HPD uses all three of these strategies.

Historically, the two largest technological advancements affecting staffing have been the use of CADs and RMSs. The primary purpose of this technology is to provide personnel with information when they need it, where they need it, and in a form they can use it. Both of these systems expedite the acquisition, facilitation, and utilization of information by police employees.⁴⁰ This occurs by making record keeping simpler, more accurate, and thus, more useful. These systems are conduits of information from which operational decisions can be made and action taken. *This type of technology is a critical enabler of police responses, investigative efforts, and analytical protocols all aimed at solving and preventing crime.*

Houston first implemented CAD⁴¹ in the mid-1980s and saw an immediate increase in benefits. Among them were:

1. Improved accountability for citizen requests (it was easy to lose paper slips, not so with electronic, digitized data);

⁴⁰ Technological advancements in the forensic field are also predominant. The HPD no longer manages forensic functions, but does use an automatic fingerprinting system (AFIS) for booking suspects into jail and for field applications when attempting to identify / verify suspects through the use of 202 mobile identification units.

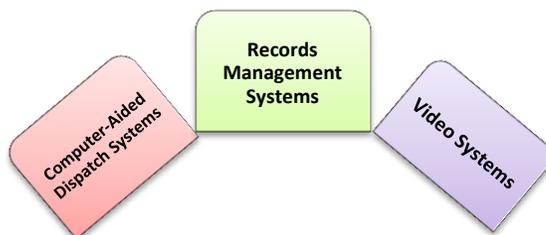
⁴¹ Electronic dispatching of calls directly to the vehicle, one-button response capabilities, and electronic mapping that facilitates a faster response are a few select components of CADs.

2. Greatly enhanced management/statistical reports (as demonstrated in the Tables throughout Section #2 of this report). Certain reports were non-existent pre-CAD;
3. Ability to monitor and improve response times (for example, CAD is much faster and more accurate in sending units to a particular address versus using key maps);
4. Improved capacity to analyze “process time increments” associated with calls;
5. Improved officer safety (CAD has the capability to alert the dispatcher as to officer status);
6. Vastly improved dispatch queue time accountability; and
7. The “Soundex” capability allows dispatchers to immediately identify locations officers are sent to thereby minimizing officers arriving at wrong locations.

In sum, the CADs facilitated officer responses to calls, assisted in improving the status of officer safety, and provided more reliable data regarding officer responsiveness.

Collectively, these benefits streamlined how calls were processed and provided information allowing supervisors and managers to determine how efficiently officer responsiveness was to calls. *One could say these collective changes allowed management to use the work force more effectively, which gave the appearance of a larger force (i.e., respond to more calls with the same amount of personnel).* From today’s perspective, those gains have been imbedded within the HPD staffing numbers for years. As the need for CAD upgrades become more dominant, the HPD will not see any additional force multiplier gains.

The same can be said with the implementation of the customized Unisys On-Line Offense (OLO) RMS over 30 years ago. Prior to the HPD not having an automated RMS it took an extreme amount of time for officers to process paperwork associated arrests. Officers would spend inordinate amounts of time filing reports, placing suspects in jail, and filing the appropriate charges. This caused more officers to be out of service not available to respond to calls or address crime and disorder problems. With the implementation of a RMS, this pressure was relieved as officers were able to complete their work more efficiently and return to service.⁴²



Which Ones Are “Force Multipliers?”
Figure #8

⁴² It is extremely difficult to tease out personnel cost savings with implementing any form of technology. The manpower growth within the HPD over the past 30 years has clearly masked any manpower reduction brought about by implementing certain types of technology. If work demands were constant over time and not influenced by a growing population and geographical expansions, cost savings would be much easier to determine.

However, in moving forward with the most recent implementation of the new “off-the-shelf” Tiburon RMS in June of 2014, the HPD has simply (but very necessarily) replaced one aging system with a more modern version. *Efficiency gains are expected to be significant, especially as Department personnel mature in their experience of knowing how to use the new attributes of the system. But these gains will not equate to a savings in staff; rather, they will be realized in terms of how information is used to identify and address crime and disorder problems.* The speed with which this information will become available will also help increase situational awareness immensely. Officers, supervisors, and managers will have access to more information to help them make effective decisions.⁴³

By way of comparison, the use of video technology can serve as a force multiplier for the HPD. Currently, there are several camera applications available for police agency personnel to use (See Table #30):

Camera Usage Available to Police Agencies

Table #30

Type of Application	Purpose of Application	Force Multiplier
Surveillance Cameras	Detection of Criminal Activity	Yes – when monitored
In-Car Video Cameras	Safety and Accountability	No
Body Cameras	Safety and Accountability	No
Automatic License Plate Readers	Detection of Criminal Activity	Yes
Red Light Cameras*	Detection of Criminal Activity	Yes
Photo Radar Cameras**	Detection of Criminal Activity	Yes

* This application is no longer used by the HPD.

** This application has not been used within Houston.

The use of surveillance cameras in Houston can serve multiple purposes; they can assist in:

1. Securing Houston’s Central Business District as a form of protection against terrorist and other types of criminal activity.
2. Securing residential neighborhoods / business centers from criminal activity (e.g., vandalism, illegal dumping, assaults, etc.).
3. Detecting problems on the highway network.

⁴³ Simple and rapid searching for known criminals with criminal histories, known addresses, photos, and fingerprints produce more arrests.

In each of these instances, cameras can serve as force multipliers but only when the cameras are constantly monitored.

The monitoring activity requires additional personnel, but the surveillance component reduces the need for more officers at locations of use; if one assumes in the absence of cameras, police officers would be assigned to these areas for the same purposes.

Conversely, the use of automatic license plate readers (ALPRs), red light cameras, and photo radar cameras are purely force multipliers.

Automatic License Plate Readers: Using ALPRs to conduct simple and rapid searching of stolen vehicles, checking status of license plates and driver's licenses produce more arrests. One vehicle outfitted with ALPR cameras does what 10 to 20 officers could do over the course of their respective shifts (See Table #31):

ALPR Activity Within the HPD*

Table #31

Year	Volume of Activity**
2009	6,000
2010	5,602
2011	2,916
2012	759
2013	248

* Source: HPD Work Card Database

** Volume of activity is dependent on availability of ALPR vehicles

The types of activity associated with ALPRs include actual arrests of suspects, identification of suspects with warrants, detection of status of moving / non-moving vehicles, and auto theft related arrests. The significant drop in activity during 2012 and 2013 is directly related to the inability of vendors to maintain technology (i.e., they are worn out and cannot be repaired). The HPD has just been approved to acquire 30 modern, sustainable ALPR units to replace the current 20, most of which are inoperable.

Red Light Cameras: Although Houston's foray with red light cameras was relatively short lived, there can be no doubt as to its effect as a force multiplier. These types of camera systems have the ability to provide "valid documentation" of the questionable driving activity, which was reverified by a smaller group of officers who made a final decision on the validity of justifying the issuance of a violation notice.

The program began in 2006 with partial installation eventually resulting in 71 cameras installed at 51 intersections. Some intersections had multiple cameras mounted to review certain traffic approaches to red lights. The program came to a conclusion in 2010.⁴⁴

Since then, the HPD has periodically deployed officers to some of these intersections to monitor compliance and issue citations to violators. Not surprisingly, effects of this effort have been minimal. Whereas citizens are not apt to run red lights in the presences of officers, management also does not have the luxury of assigning officers to these intersections (or others) on a full time basis. Hence, the value of using cameras as a force multiplier is pretty obvious.

The program has been inoperable for at least 4 years. During the life of the program, efforts were made to determine effects of crashes in monitored approaches, both before installation and after. Those efforts were assessed by members of Rice University and the Texas Transportation Institute. They concluded the program was reducing crashes at the 50 targeted intersections.⁴⁵

In reexamining crashes occurring at the original 51 intersections, during the project time period compared to the four year time period after the project was abandoned; crashes have increased (See Tables #32 and #33; the yellow highlight depicts the time cameras were operational):

⁴⁴ It was not surprising, when provided the opportunity, for citizens to respond negatively to supporting the continued use of red light cameras. If one can remove the ability to capture themselves violating the law and subsequently avoiding consequences, then why not vote to have it removed. Since that vote and eventual removal of these cameras, there has seen increases in crash activity.

⁴⁵ Stevenson, Benjamin, Rice University; Dahnke, Robert, Rice University; Dr. Lomax, Tim, Transportation Institute, and Dr. Stein, Robert, Rice University; "Houston's Digital Automated Red Light Enforcement Program – Revised Report", November 2009, p. 1.

Crashes Occurring at Former Red Light Intersections*
Table #32

Year	Total Crashes	Major Crashes	Fatal Crashes	DWI-Related Crashes	Commercial Vehicle Crashes
2005 - 2006	1,136	410	6	18	11
2006 - 2007**	875	313	4	15	11
2007 - 2008**	849	330	2	14	21
2008 - 2009	1,000	385	3	29	39
2009 - 2010	1,423	363	1	30	38
2010 - 2011	2,292	653	3	57	84
2011 - 2012	1,870	570	3	55	66
2012 - 2013	2,295	656	5	71	107
2013 - 2014	2,527	689	2	69	96

* Source: Houston Police Department, Date Range: August 1st – July 31st

** Although the camera system was partially installed, this data includes crashes occurring at all 51 intersections even during the time before all 71 cameras were installed. For example, if only 10 cameras were initially installed from 2006 – 2007, the data for that time frame represents crashes occurring at all 51 intersections.

Crashes Occurring at Former Red Light Intersections
Summative Crash Report*
Table #33

Year	Total Crashes	Major Crashes	Fatal Crashes	DWI- Related Crashes	Commercial Vehicle Crashes
2006 - 2010**	4,147	1,391	10	88	109
2010 - 2014	8,984	2,568	13	252	353
Percent Changes	116.64%	84.62%	30.00%	186.36%	223.85%

* Source: Houston Police Department, Date Range: August 1st – July 31st

** Although the camera system was partially installed; this data includes crashes occurring at all 51 intersections even during the time before all 71 cameras were installed. For example, if only 10 cameras were initially installed from 2006 – 2007, the data for that time frame represents crashes occurring at all 51 intersections.

Observations:

1. This analysis is different from the Rice University project assessment. Data in Tables #32 and #33 represents crashes occurring within 500 feet of the intersection as well as crashes within the intersection. The Rice University project assessment examined

crash activity occurring only in the monitored approaches. This assessment simply demonstrates increased activity; but one could reasonably expect a portion of this increase to be occurring in approaches where cameras were previously deployed.

2. *The HPD does not have sufficient staffing to regularly assign to monitor these 51 intersections or any additional intersections in which there is a high frequency of crashes.*
3. Periodic allocations of overtime can be used; but then again, it becomes a question of where to dedicate precious overtime dollars when other numerous competing work demands are occurring throughout the city.

In conclusion, the concept of “force multiplier” has limited application in today’s policing environment. When CADs and RMSs were initially installed in police departments, there was a force multiplier effect, but it has diminished over time. The use of video applications, more specifically the use of cameras, is another growing technology within the field of policing. Red light, photo radar, and ALPRs definitely serve as force multipliers⁴⁶ but for restricted purposes. Nonetheless, any legitimate means aimed at assisting officers in their mission to serve the public is worthy of consideration.

⁴⁶ Another type of surveillance camera usage is for monitoring illegal dumping, which the HPD uses on a limited scale. The use of “third-party” cameras (citizen cell phones) is prevalent but does not fall under the control and management of the HPD.

Section Four **The Relationship between Management and Staffing**

Given the costs associated with any increased staffing request, the HPD should expect to be questioned about their utilization of current personnel. What assurance does the public have the Department's Command Staff is using existing manpower effectively and efficiently? *It has been proposed on more than one occasion the HPD avail itself to a "performance review" by an independent qualified outside consultant. The Department unequivocally supports and welcomes such a review.* The Command Staff has never shied away from opportunities to learn how it can serve its customers better, either by correcting inefficiencies or adopting new strategies and tactics.

As the country's fifth largest police agency, the HPD has certainly experienced its share of difficulties and embarrassments that lead citizens to justifiably question if operations and personnel are being managed competently. These doubts have no less standing when citizens are confronted with claims from within the Department that it is understaffed.

It is necessary to ensure the public these staffing shortfalls are not the result of ineffective decision making on behalf of the HPD's Command Staff. As illustrated in Section One: The Challenge of Providing Police Services in Houston, there are an extraordinary number of competing service demands for each Core Service. As these demands continue to grow competition will intensify further exacerbating resource utilization decisions.

This Section briefly explores the issue of how managerial decisions are effecting the utilization of manpower within the HPD. Management cannot expect to ask for more staff without first being able to defend how they are using the current complement of personnel. The following examples reflect prior decisions made and the implications associated with each:

1. Alternative Response Unit: consists of officers and civilians assigned to the Patrol Desk Unit and Teleserve Unit in the Emergency Communications Division. HPD's On-Line Police Reporting web site⁴⁷ also allows citizens to report certain types of crimes over the Internet. Depending on the call type, citizens can receive immediate assistance over the phone by discussing their matter with a police officer or by filing an official police report.

Staffing Implications – this unit was responsible in 2013 for reducing the number of dispatchable calls to patrol officers by 11%. Citizens are receiving immediate assistance, which equates to increased satisfaction. Patrol officers can attend to other higher priority calls or spend more time addressing neighborhood crime and disorder issues.

⁴⁷ www.houstontx.gov/police/online_report.htm

2. Mental Health Division: represents the only division level status entity in any police agency in the United States. This signifies the Department’s commitment to providing competent responses to a specialized population who provide unique service challenges. While this Division is small in numbers, its community impact has been enormous.⁴⁸ It has also been nationally recognized over the years because of its performances.

Staffing Implications – this is clearly a specialized entity, which is staffed by personnel who might normally be assigned to a patrol or investigative division. The service load has been increasing over the years and is not expected to stabilize anytime soon given the aging of “traditionalists and baby boomers.”⁴⁹ Staffing investments will continuously have to be made for this division (See Table #34).

Mental Health Division Demands*

Table #34

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
CIT Calls**	23,913	25,105	25,489	27,655	29,272
CIRT Calls***	3,461	4,518	6,348	5,442	5,420
Female Consumers	2,106	3,115	3,696	3,526	4,060
Male Consumers	2,699	3,822	4,580	4,655	5,437
NPC Admits****	2,640	3,617	4,192	4,036	4,421
Hospital Admits	1,166	937	1,714	2,470	2,655

* Source: Mental Health Division Annual Report, Houston Police Department, 2013

** Crisis Intervention Team calls can be handled by patrol officers, most all of whom have received CIT training.

*** Crisis Intervention Response Team calls are handled by specialized personnel assigned to the Mental Health Division.

**** NPC = Neuropsychiatric Center, Harris County

3. Real Time Crime Center: has been in operation for several years and provides information support to patrol officers and investigators, which allow them to approach call locations more safely; acquire information about possible suspects thereby alerting them to the potential for danger; and identify information that can

⁴⁸ A recent study conducted by students of the Northwestern University, Evanston Illinois, found: “Officers responding to Critical Incident Training (CIT) designated situations were 82% less likely to use their guns as compare to non-CIT situations.” “Mathematical Methods In The Social Sciences Houston Police Department Project on Officer-Involved Shootings,” Anthony L. Colucci, JohnPatrick McCleary, and Yan Jie Ng, Northwestern University, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences Mathematical Methods in Social Sciences, June 4, 2014 p. x.

⁴⁹ <http://www.wmfc.org/uploads/GenerationalDifferencesChart.pdf> - the birth date range for the “Traditionalist Generation is 1900 – 1945; the birth date range for “Baby Boomers” is 1946 – 1980.

expedite interdiction of criminal incidents and case clearances. The Center also provides an analysis of crimes that facilitate strategic and tactical discussions among Command Staff members at regularly scheduled crime strategy meetings.⁵⁰

Staffing Implications – when coupled with each patrol division’s crime analysis capabilities, the information serves as the basis for implementing tactics to interdict criminal activity. The Crime Center does not serve as a force multiplier for the HPD, but it does contribute significantly to using personnel more effectively. The manner in which this is done varies in accordance with the targeted crime(s) and the ability to maintain pressure over time.⁵¹

4. Crime Strategy Meetings: occur bi-weekly for the explicit purpose of requiring division commanders to account for the effectiveness of their operation. This is the HPD’s version of the “Compstat Model” and is heavily based on using data to direct how personnel are used to address neighborhood crime and disorder issues.

Staffing Implications – this strategy is all about where personnel are deployed and effectiveness of interdiction tactics. Division Commanders are held accountable for the performance of their respective personnel. These meetings have contributed in keeping Houston’s crime rates from escalating. Whether or not the rate is low enough is certainly open to debate; but suffice to say, total crime has not significantly trended upwards for a number of years.

5. Investigative First Responder Division (IFR): the creation of this division allows uniformed patrol officers to immediately begin conducting preliminary and follow-up investigations in response to certain types of crimes. Citizens are very pleased with the immediacy of this approach as it avoids delays having to wait for a traditional investigative response. IFR officers work in conjunction with other patrol officers and investigators on specific types of criminal incidents (See Tables #35 and #36):

⁵⁰ For the past few years, the HPD has been exploring the emerging software applications that support experimentation with “predictive analytics.” Despite the hoopla by vendors and some police agencies, true predictive analytics are not nearly as robust as they are made to sound. Nevertheless, it is a process meriting attention and despite local criticism directed towards the HPD as being out of touch with “new approaches,” nothing could be further from the truth.

⁵¹ Criticism has been leveled against the HPD for their lack of implementing the Compstat Model developed by Commissioner William Bratton, New York City Police Department. Compstat is widely known as a crime data driven strategy whereby commanders are held accountable for specific crime reduction activities in specific neighborhoods. HPD’s criticism has come in the form of not using a sufficiently data driven approach and for not being more aggressive in attacking crime problems throughout the city.

IFR Case Distribution*
Table #35

Associated Division	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Homicide	36%	27%	28%	30%	28%
Burglary and Theft	29%	28%	29%	29%	33%
Special Victims	24%	35%	35%	32%	30%
Robbery	6%	4%	3%	4%	5%
Other	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%

* Source: IFR Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

IFR Case Production*
Table #36

Year	Cases Worked	Inactivated	Cases Cleared	Arrests
2009	3,744	626 (16.7%)	3,118 (83.3%)	1,407
2010	7,394	1,125 (15.2%)	6,269 (84.8%)	2,662
2011	7,130	1,069 (15%)	6,061 (85%)	2,625
2012	6,361	1,105 (17.4%)	5,256 (82.6%)	2,340
2013	6,336	1,279 (20%)	5,057 (80%)	2,094

* Source: IFR Division, Houston Police Department, August 2014

Staffing Implications – since these officers do not run calls for service, they can relieve patrol officers of certain types of crime calls that necessitate follow-up investigations. This in turn allows patrol officers to redirect their time and effort toward other work demands.

They also relieve investigators of having to handle minor crime (nonetheless important to citizens) thereby allowing them to spend more time on complex crimes. *More manpower allotted to this division will pay dividends for other operational entities within the HPD and with citizens.*

6. Acquisition of Tasers: this equipment provides an alternative to control situations in which citizens are combative or are directly threatening to violently attack officers. It is not intended to replace using deadly force when properly justified; however, it has primarily prevented struggles between officers and suspects in which suspects try to hurt and / or disarm officers.

Staffing Implications – far fewer officers are off-duty recuperating from injuries sustained in fighting with suspects, which means more officers

are working the neighborhoods. Since the acquisition of these devices worker's compensation claims have plummeted.

7. Sobering Center: conceptually, this facility was the brainchild of personnel working in the Mental Health Division and came to fruition as an alternative to placing inebriates in jail. Citizens placed in this facility avoid receiving a criminal record and depending on the status of their addictiveness, are offered opportunities to address their illness so as to avoid relapses. Although the Center operates independently from the HPD, the partnership bond it has formed with members of the Mental Health Division is invaluable.

Staffing Implications – officers spend less time processing citizens for public intoxication arrests thereby allowing them to return to neighborhoods more quickly. This is not a force multiplier, but it provides efficiency gains that allow staff to be more diligent in time utilization.

8. ISO Certification:⁵² the HPD currently has three ISO certified divisions (Emergency Communications, Property, and Records). Three additional divisions are in the early stages of pursuing certification – Mental Health, Inspections, and Budget and Finance.

Staffing Implications – ISO does not have a direct effect on staffing operational entities (although work with the Mental Health Division will be the first such attempt). The emphasis has been focused on increasing efficiencies within support divisions accessed or used by line level personnel. If one can be assured of providing officers / investigators with efficient services, they will be able to spend more time on their respective primary obligations.

9. Software Program Applications: considerable efforts have been made to improve access to information for citizens and officers. Citizens can now use the internet to access HPD's website to determine the status of suspects in jail; they can determine the location of their towed vehicle; requested incident reports can be acquired electronically; investigators can use "Leads On-Line" to expedite the identification and location of stolen property; and "Gang- Tracker" provides opportunities to identify and track gang activity.

⁵² International Organization for Standardization is a "process engineering" approach designed to reduce costs by minimizing waste and error as a means of increasing production and customer satisfaction. This approach is fundamentally anchored by the implementation of a quality management system with a commitment to continuously pursue quality improvements. The HPD is one of a very few police agencies in the United States who have committed to adopting this approach in select divisions. See www.iso.org for further information about the concept.

Staffing Implications – these examples demonstrate attempts to minimize reliance on staff to provide basic services to citizens and police personnel. While these improvements do not directly equate to more officers on the street, they do demonstrate efficiency gains in how certain types of work are performed.

10. Research Projects: the HPD has prided itself on developing excellent partnerships with outside businesses and academic institutions. Over the years, research into a multitude of issues has occurred, inclusive of but not limited to:

- Sam Houston State University-Criminal Justice Center – tactical deployment effectiveness, manpower allocation, citizen satisfaction surveys; firearms study;
- Northwestern University – effective deployment of personnel, officer involved shooting analysis; conducted energy device use; young black murders;
- University of Texas Memorial Herman Health System, Harris Health System, Houston Area Women's Center, Houston Forensic Science Center, Harris County District Attorney's Office, Sam Houston State University, University of Texas @ Austin, Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault – consortium to develop recommendations for addressing various issues associated with sexual assaults;
- Texas Southern University – relationship between HPD and the black community;
- University of Houston – TAPS – youth mentoring program;
- Rice University – Red Light Camera Program assessment;
- Justex – manpower allocation; and
- KPMG – recruiting practice

Staffing Implications – the HPD does not hold the market on information governing how well its resources should be used. The more information one can glean from the efforts of other independent, unbiased partners, the more confident one can become that decisions are not only factually based but are consistent with best practices.

Consolidation: A few words are in order regarding the issue of organizational consolidation as a means of using existing personnel efficiently. This issue frequently surfaces when questions are raised about cost cutting measures and / or allegations of the HPD being too “top heavy” (too many Command Staff members for an agency this size).

There are generally two types of consolidation as it relates to the business of policing: combining functionality within an organization and combining functionality among different organizations.

Combining functionality within an organization would imply an excess number of people are performing duplicative work. Furthermore, the manner in which work is performed is characterized as inefficient. Consolidation allows for a redistribution of the workload for efficiency gains without sacrificing the provision of quality services. The net effect of redistribution is an availability of personnel for reassignment (or in the case of fiscal crisis – furloughs, layoffs, or retirements).

The HPD has been asked why it has not consolidated its workforce at the Command Staff level. Critics point to other police departments and claim the HPD could perform just as effectively and efficiently with fewer executives. This report is not the proper forum to fully vet this issue as this is not a simple decision; there are consequences for this type of decision – chief among them is the effect it would have on accountability.⁵³

In alluding to one of the axioms identified within Section One of this report, this matter can best be determined via a thorough organizational performance review conducted by a qualified independent entity. As mentioned previously, the HPD stands ready to participate in any such endeavor.

As a contrast, consolidating similar functionality between different organizations could have value depending on what is being targeted. For example, we are beginning to see indications of this approach with the city / county collaboration in the building of the new Processing Center. As mentioned earlier, when completed, approximately 80+ classified personnel will be available for reassignment with some of those counting as an offset to increased staffing for operations.

The HPD is not averse to discussions regarding consolidation; but this matter can be very complicated from a number of perspectives (e.g., legal, financial, operational, and administrative). Generally, it is not an easy undertaking and there are no guarantees the economies of scale will be positive; but this should never detract from having open and honest discussions as to what is best for citizens affected by such decisions.⁵⁴

It takes a considerable amount of effort to manage a police agency as large as the HPD. This report does not discuss the enormous efforts it takes to insure people are held accountable for

⁵³ As spans of control (the number of people reporting to a supervisor) increase, it becomes more difficult to account for performance and behavior of a larger reporting base.

⁵⁴ Consolidation has also been brought up in discussions regarding the newly established Houston Forensic Center. As this organization continues to settle into its responsibilities, ultimately steps will be taken to assess its relationship with other forensic organizations working in the region. Because the work demands in this field are so great, consolidation discussions will probably focus more on managerial control than gleaning any significant cost savings from staffing reconfigurations (this excludes discussions related to capital investments).

their behavior; nor have there been discussions regarding the recruitment, training, and mentoring of personnel. Conducting inspections and audits with respect to compliance with rules and regulations is also an important set of responsibilities performed within the HPD. All of these functions, along with others, are necessary in supporting the efforts of patrol and investigative personnel.

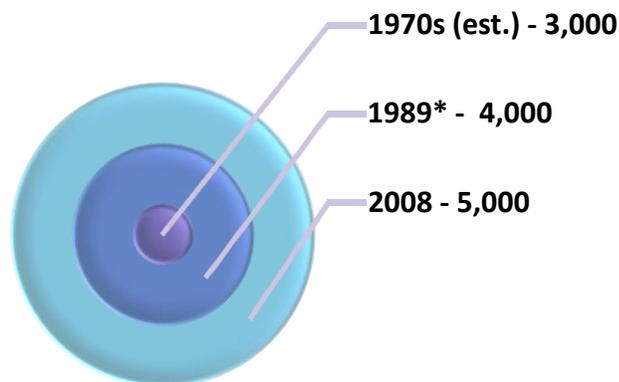
Effort has been and will continue to be made to use staff in the best manner possible. But these efforts cannot mask the need for additional staff. The HPD will use its personnel in a manner befitting to the nature of various work demands. Each of aforementioned 10 items serves to illustrate a sample of management's commitment to expend existing time and resources to the best of their collective abilities.

Section Five **Staffing Needs for the Houston Police Department**

Dating back to 1983, the HPD has examined the need for increased staffing on six different occasions. Five of the six initiatives were Department driven initiatives resulting in the production of documents produced by HPD personnel. In one other instance, assistance was provided by the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University. The outcome from each of these efforts noted the need for staffing increases.

It would be disingenuous not to acknowledge the HPD has grown in size over the years. In looking back, Figure #10 identifies three staffing benchmarks in the hiring of classified personnel were achieved:

Classified Staffing Benchmarks
Figure #10



*Staffing had exceeded 4,000 earlier in the 1980s but declined to the low point in 1989

The pace with which this growth occurred was based in part on the population and geographic growth of Houston.

One of the more memorable HPD staffing spurts occurred under former Mayor Bob Lanier. The famed “655 Program” in which overtime money was appropriated to the HPD to field an additional 655 officers to compensate for inadequate staffing. This was prompted by a “hue and cry” among citizens who were upset with the HPD’s inability to provide acceptable response times to their calls for service and a perceived rampant crime rate. Over a period of several years, the Department’s staffing increased with a corresponding decrease in funding the “655 Program” until a point in time was reached when sufficient growth was attained and the program was no longer needed. This was a poignant time for Houston and one that has not since reoccurred.

Today, we find ourselves once again confronted with the issue of staffing with the HPD. The environment however, is different from the days when the “655 Program” was needed. There is no pressing outcry from citizens regarding response times. That is not to say all citizens are satisfied with everything the HPD does, but generally speaking the overall performance of the HPD has been acceptable.

Also, unlike most prior attempts to assess the staffing issue, the Department was able to hire PERF and Justex to conduct their analyses. *Their Report serves as the first independent vendor driven effort to examine the status of operational staffing within the HPD.* As a reminder, this was a restricted examination looking primarily at patrol and investigative operations since these entities provide the bulk of services in response to citizen generated work demands.

To recap, PERF and Justex brought focus to three compatible staffing perspectives:

1. *There is no magical staffing number for any police agency.* As communities evolve different demands will be placed on police agencies. Some of those demands will be static (i.e., recurring) while others will be fluid (i.e., changing over different periods of time). Police executives are expected to adjust with existing resources; and when unable to do so, make the case for needing some form of assistance.
2. *The staffing question for HPD is evolving from “How many do you need?” to one of “How will additional officers be used?”* This moves the discussion about staffing from trusting the police to know what is appropriate to sitting in judgment of the justification for staffing increases. In today’s cost conscious society, *there must be a balance between staffing that is absolutely necessary and staffing that may be addressed incrementally over time.*
3. Police executives are expected to tie staffing increases to performance criteria. *This means the discussion about staffing must pivot from identifying what officers will do to demonstrating the effects of what they will do.* This is an extremely difficult challenge for police executives, but one that is becoming more prevalent in today’s cost conscious society.

The PERF / Justex Report does not advocate a specific number of officers the HPD must have to do their job. Their expert assessment plus their use of computer-based models for Patrol and Investigative operations were used to generate staffing options for the HPD to consider.⁵⁵

Although there were 11 patrol-oriented staffing options contained within the Report, many other variations could have been generated by altering various performance variables within the software programs. Investigative staffing options were based on the status of suspects and the nature of crimes committed.

⁵⁵ The computer-based models are technically referred to as: Allocation Model for Patrol (AMP) and Allocation Model for Investigations (AMI).

As a result of reading the Report and conferring with his executive staff, Chief McClelland believes there is a definite need to infuse patrol and investigative operations with the following number of personnel:

1. There is an *immediate* need for 319 officers and a corresponding number of 46 sergeants (7 to 1 ratio).⁵⁶ This will help to alleviate the difficulty HPD is experiencing in sending two-officers to calls for service in which there is a strong propensity for violence. *This is an important safety issue.*
2. There is an *immediate* need for an additional 101 officers in Investigative Operations. There may be a small number of sergeants needed depending upon the specific situation within receiving divisions.
3. There is a need for an additional 660 officers and a corresponding number of 94 sergeants. The number of sergeants could be reduced, depending upon officer assignments.

Collectively, this amounts to increasing the operational capacity of the HPD by 1,220 officers over time. This figure is derived as follows: 319 + 101 + 660 + officer replacements for each of the 140 sergeants = 1,220.

There are a number of important observations associated with this proposal:

1. First and foremost, the HPD is not insensitive to the cost impact this proposal will have on Houston.
2. There is a distinction between what is “immediately needed” and what is “needed.” While both are necessary, the pace of growth should have flexibility. This item will be addressed in Section Seven of this report.
3. The assignment of 365 officers and 46 sergeants will all be assigned to Field Operations for placement within various patrol divisions (The 46 sergeants would be replaced by 46 police officers [319 + 46 = 365].).
 - A. This will result in an improvement in the Department’s capacity to comply with its two-officer response policy to dangerous calls for service.
 - B. This will result in response times coming more into compliance with Priority Response Time goals for Code 3, 4, and 5 calls.

⁵⁶ As of August 2014 the current overall officer to sergeant ratio in Field Operations is 6 – 1. Caution is urged as this is an average; some units have higher / smaller ratios depending upon the nature of the unit’s work.

- C. The capacity to prevent crime by increasing staff to perform suppression tactics and self-initiated activities would be strengthened.
4. The assignment of 101 investigative officers will be in accordance with recommendations in the Report.
 - A. Approximately 45 officers will be distributed among divisions within the Criminal Investigations Command resulting in an increase in the number of cases investigated. Of that total, 27 officers will be assigned to investigate violent crimes and 18 officers assigned to investigate property crimes.
 - B. The Robbery Division would be assigned 17 additional investigators allowing personnel to increase time spent investigating cases where possible suspects have been identified and to increase time spent handling post-custody investigative responsibilities.
 - C. The Special Victims Division would be assigned 9 additional investigators to increase the capacity to investigate forcible rape cases.
 - D. The Burglary and Theft Division would be assigned 27 additional investigators to increase the number of cases investigated.⁵⁷
 5. The remaining 754 police officer positions and 94 sergeants would be distributed in an effort to address the following work demands (The 94 sergeants would be replaced with 94 police officers [660 + 94 = 754]):
 - A. Field Operations:
 - 1) Officers would be assigned to respond to calls; conduct more directed patrols in targeted crime locations, which would have a commensurate value of increased visibility in neighborhoods; and conduct more self-initiated activities aimed at interdicting criminal activity.
 - 2) Tactical Teams – these units, assigned to patrol division captains are responsible for implementing criminal interdiction tactics; they are not required to respond to calls. Increased capacity is needed for them to be more effective.

⁵⁷ "Operational Staffing Report," Police Executive Research Forum and Justex Systems, Inc., Houston Police Department, May, 2014, pp. 144 – 145.

- 3) Directed Response Team Officers – increase the capacity of these units to respond to neighborhood disorder problems; they would also assist in target hardening activities within neighborhoods.
 - 4) Traffic Enforcement – officers would be assigned to work segments of the highway system; increase capacity to enforce speed violations, arrest DWI violators, and intensify truck enforcement and interdiction tactics.
- B. Investigative Operations:
- 1) Vehicular Crimes – additional officers are needed to work crashes involving suspects who fail to stop and give information and fail to stop and render aid.
 - 2) Special Victims – officers would be used to increase the capacity to spend more time working family violence and child abuse cases.
 - 3) Major Offenders – officers are needed to increase the capacity to remove targeted offenders (serial recidivists) from the community; and work more sophisticated organized crime events (i.e., cell phone robberies); assist with investigating gang-related crimes; and increase a commitment to regional task forces.
 - 4) Narcotics – officers would increase the HPD’s capacity to dismantle / destroy DTOs as well as expand the ability to work various neighborhood drug problems.
 - 5) Vice – officers are needed to increase the ability to conduct sting operations on sexual oriented businesses and street corner prostitutions; as well as an increased commitment to addressing human trafficking problems in the city and region.
 - 6) Homicide – officers are needed to increase the capacity to investigate major aggravated assault cases.
 - 7) Investigative First Responder / Gang Divisions – additional personnel for both divisions will immediately result in increased implementation of interdiction and investigative tactics within targeted neighborhoods.

At first blush, it seems pretty unreasonable to suggest the HPD needs to increase its operational staffing by 1,220 officers. After all, there is no crisis to suggest the HPD or the city needs this large of an infusion of officers. Point of fact, some critics will state the HPD already has a sufficient number of personnel; and what is needed is new leadership that is willing to use existing personnel differently and thereby negate the need for additional personnel.

Critics have also been quick to point out other cities have experienced large gains in crime reduction brought about by the implementation of Compstat or some method closely resembling that approach. What people choose to ignore are reports on how police agencies, using such methods like Los Angeles, New York City, Atlanta, Chicago, and Milwaukee, to name a few, have been accused of falsifying crime data. Whether or not this is brought about by the pressure of accountability is unknown, but it makes one wonder.

Nor does this suggest legitimate crime reduction is not occurring; to the contrary, strides have been made the past two decades. But caution is urged to conclude a “cause and effect” relationship between crime reduction and the use of any particular strategy.

Crime reduction is more apt to be a by-product of multiple variables; some acting in concert with one another while others act independently. Setting any differences aside, the HPD must continue to avail itself to change, not for the sake of change itself; but because of the belief that if one is not willing to explore opportunities for improvement, one is apt to lose ground in the struggle to keep Houstonians safe.

What tends to get lost in this bantering is the simple fact that existing department leadership and critics of that leadership both realize efforts must be taken to address crime and disorder in Houston. What they disagree on is the means by which this will occur.

The HPD Command Staff is not averse to exploring other methods of deploying its personnel if there are assurances such methods will be effective. However, the manner in which data is analyzed and methods used to deploy officers cannot replace the inevitable need of additional personnel at some point in the future. Failure to acknowledge this will ultimately result in missed opportunities for impacting crime and disorder.

To the extent funding allows, it is wiser to build up capacity over time as opposed to waiting until a crisis appears and we find ourselves “playing catch up.” Being in a position to prevent, or at least minimize crime and disorder problems saves a lot of grief and regret for every potential victim.

Section Six The Effect of Civilianization*⁵⁸

The purpose of this Section is to examine the potential effect civilianization would contribute toward placement of more officers in Field Operation and Investigative Operation assignments. Although the issue of examining civilianization on a department-wide basis was not a part of the scope of PERF and Justex's work, they identified numerous opportunities for this to occur within their report. Subsequently, Police Chief McClelland authorized the commission of an initiative to examine how civilianization could offset hiring new classified personnel.

The HPD's workforce consists of Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) licensed peace officers and non-commissioned employees. These employees are referred to as "classified" and "civilian" respectively. All employees perform a broad array of roles necessary for the operations of the department. From an oversimplified perspective, these roles can be categorized in accordance with the organization's configuration:

1. Chief's Command & Chief of Staff – consists of personnel performing such functions as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. Ultimately, the primary customer, either directly or indirectly, is the Chief of Police. Additionally, personnel in the Command are responsible for crime analysis, the Real Time Crime Center, public affairs, working with citizens on crime prevention matters, and the administration of some youth related programs.
2. Strategic Operations – consists of personnel engaged in homeland security and tactical support activities, personnel and training related functions, and support activities related to records, jail operations, dispatch, and evidence preservation.
3. Investigative Operations – consists of those persons engaged in investigative or regulatory functions. Also, the department's technology operations fall under this area.
4. Field Operations – consists of personnel directly engaged with the public in patrol and other uniformed activities regarding traffic enforcement and mental health issues.

Within each of these roles are a myriad of responsibilities, some performed by classified personnel while others are handled by civilians. Over time and for various reasons, the rationale used to distinguish between which jobs are performed by which group has been less than clear.

⁵⁸ A majority of the information for this Section was extracted from material provided by Mr. Larry Yium, Deputy Director, Planning Office, Houston Police Department, September 2014.

This is primarily due to an interpretation as to what represents “police work,” which is defined in terms as activities solely deemed the province of licensed police officers. This would suggest civilians would not have the authority, knowledge, or abilities to perform the work. This distinction is quite clear when assessing the application of civilianization to Operations personnel. It is not so clear when considering employees working in Administrative and Support capacities.

The first challenge consequently is determining what criteria should be used to decide if a position qualifies as one a civilian could be hired to perform. The decision process used by the Vancouver Police Service, San Jose Police Department, New York Police Department, Los Angeles Police Department, and Chicago Police Department generally involved a series of sequential questions. An answer of “no” to the first four questions along with an answer of yes to the fifth question would result in a conclusion the position should be civilianized. The questions the agencies asked ranged in number from three to six.

Proposed Criteria:

As an adaption of questions used by other agencies and made applicable to the HPD, the following decision process is being considered:

1. Does the position require law enforcement duties (i.e., powers of arrests, use of force, statutory requirements, carrying a firearm)?
2. Are the skills, training, experience, or credibility of a sworn officer required to fulfill the duties of the position?
3. Would assigning a classified officer to the position in question be helpful in developing their leadership skills?
4. Would assigning classified officer be helpful for other reasons (e.g. assignment would be helpful in developing the skills or knowledge of civilian staff)?
5. Can the requirements of the position be fulfilled by a specially trained civilian?

In analyzing a position for the potential of civilianization, questions 1-4 must be answered “no”, and the last question must have a “yes” answer.

Chief McClelland provided further guidance by stating that although a position might meet the test, it would not be civilianized if it required a change in state law or is perceived by the Majority Bargaining Agent as requiring a change or addition to the Meet & Confer Agreement.

Cursory steps were taken to identify positions that could possibly be converted to civilian status. Those efforts resulted in identifying the following “potential positions” that could be subjected to civilianization⁵⁹ (See Figure #11):

Target Population for Civilianization

Figure #11



It is very important to state; this is a preliminary review of positions and in no way should suggest a total of 443 positions will be civilianized. There is certainly room for discussion, which will require an in-depth analysis, inclusive, but not limited to applying the aforementioned questions before a final determination can be made. What is important is management's willingness to move in this direction. However, such a move is not without risks.

Additionally, when the Harris County Processing Center is completed resulting in the city closing the municipal jail facilities, a total of 46 sergeants and 9 lieutenants will be available for reassignment. These sergeants can serve as an off-set to the 140 sergeants mentioned in Section Five. Since these sergeants already exist, there will be no need to replace them with police officers, thereby reducing the overall figure of 1,220 by a corresponding amount.

⁵⁹ Included within this count are positions from the Jail, which upon completion of the new Harris County Processing Center will result in closing Houston's municipal jail.

Risks and Mitigation

There are many implications to a large-scale civilianization program. It creates risks that must be mitigated. While such programs nationwide have been successful in the short term, they have generally caused problems in the long-term that hinders the agency. This is typically due to the decision to reduce the number of classified positions when the civilian positions are hired. Houston's situation would be different in that classifieds would be reassigned, not eliminated via attrition.

In difficult financial times when the demand to reduce budgets is exceptionally strong, civilian positions are more likely to be eliminated rather than classified positions. This creates an immediate adverse effect within the agency and for citizens because lost civilian positions are backfilled with classified personnel. This translates to fewer officers in operational positions, thereby nullifying any gains one sought to achieve initially.

The abolishment of civilian positions also results in the loss of necessary skills and knowledge, which is why they were hired in the first place. Therefore, more productivity is lost from having to retrain officers to perform duties previously held by civilians.

The substitution of civilian positions for needed additional classified positions creates a number of risks the Department and the City must be willing to mitigate.

1. Fiscal Risk: civilians working within the HPD cannot be unilaterally considered as expendable resources during fiscally stressful times. As in any organization, one always wants to mitigate permanent layoffs or the use of extended furloughs; but if it is not possible, a form of stratification must occur that prioritizes position eligibility for layoffs.
2. Reduction of Reserve Force: there will always be a certain number of classified officers performing non-operational duties simply because the experience and wisdom gained from working in a "line" capacity is essential to successfully performing in a "non-line" job. This issue is not about eliminating a reserve capacity in the HPD, but reducing its size and eventual impact when required to temporarily report to an operational assignment.

The obvious example when this could occur is due to a natural disaster, a prolonged riotous situation; a significant terrorist event; etc. If and when the civilian workforce grows, steps must be taken to determine if they can provide a wider array of services to officers during times of need.

3. Hiring: hiring for civilian vacancies in a police agency can be more difficult than for other city departments. Civilians working in the HPD have a higher threshold of background clearance than regular municipal employees, due to the accessibility to sensitive law enforcement information. Further, their work products will be more scrutinized and questioned than their professional peers or employees performing

similar activities in other city departments or the private sector. This is due to their working in an organization that is highly scrutinized by the public and to the employees potentially handling of evidence or access to law enforcement information. Additionally, shift (unpopular work hours) work exists for some positions, while a similar job in other organizations is a day shift only position. Finding the right person for the right job with an appropriate pay and benefit package is a necessity for any civilianization effort to be successful.

4. Retention: retention of a new hire is critical. Almost by definition, a civilian has skills and experience desired by other law enforcement agencies, other public/city departments, or private sector companies. As such, employees may be lured to another competing organization; much more so, than a classified employee. Since civilians are often hired to meet specific skill or experience requirements and since classified personnel fill the majority of supervisory and above positions, promotional opportunities are limited. Seeking these opportunities are reasons why civilian employees currently leave the HPD. Steps must be taken to insure everything within reason can be reasonably done to retain competent members of the civilian workforce.

In conclusion, a significant component of increasing classified staffing within the HPD can be a commitment to civilianization. Every classified member who is replaced by a civilian and remains with the HPD (i.e., does not retire) equates to hiring one less officer. In other words, some percentage of the 1,220 growth positions could be accounted for by reassigning existing personnel.

In either instance, there are cost implications associated with hiring classifieds and civilians. This will be discussed in the next Section of this report.

Section Seven Cost Implications for Additional Staff

As indicated earlier in this report, the cost of providing police services to Houstonians is very costly. It consumes a significant portion of the city's overall budget (See Table #37):

General Fund Comparison of City of Houston and the HPD*

Table #37

Year	Actual City Budget	HPD Actual Budget	% Of Total City Budget
2010	1,916,387,314	662,765,860	34.58%
2011	1,900,875,563	663,419,953	34.90%
2012	1,810,550,855	640,887,479	35.39%
2013	1,945,652,537	697,417,221	35.84%
2014**	2,085,336,879	723,158,146	34.68%

* Source: Budget and Finance Office, HPD, September 2014

** As of September 29, 2014

Rightfully so, of all the questions people have about the department's budget, one of the more popular ones is: "Why is the budget so big?"

Answers to that question include:

1. The cost of personnel in terms of compensation and benefits continues to rise. Salaries and pensions are controlled by contracts between the HPD and the city. Suffice to say, over the years, these costs continue to escalate. Table #38 specifies what portion of the budget is attributed to classified personnel costs:

HPD's Classified Personnel Costs*
Table #38

Year	HPD Actual Budget	Actual Classified Costs	% Of Total Budget
2010	667,064,809	531,523,128	79.7%
2011	663,419,953	538,661,363	81.2%
2012	640,887,479	527,623,422	82.3%
2013	697,417,221	568,588,802	81.5%
2014**	721,997,316	580,084,912	80.3%

* Source: Budget and Finance Office, HPD, September 2014; includes benefit costs⁶⁰

** As of September 29, 2014

The actual personnel cost for civilians is not included within Table #38. Those figures are included in Table #39:

HPD's Civilian Personnel Costs*
Table #39

Year	HPD Actual Budget	Actual Civilian Costs	% Of Total Budget
2010	667,064,809	85,638,583	12.8%
2011	663,419,953	84,025,472	12.7%
2012	640,887,479	69,096,981	10.8%
2013	697,417,221	75,450,248	10.8%
2014**	721,997,316	75,040,304	10.4%

* Source: Budget and Finance Office, HPD, September 2014; includes benefit costs⁶¹

** As of September 29, 2014

Over the five-year period of time, the Total Personnel costs as a percentage of the Total Actual General Fund Budget is displayed in Figure #12:

⁶⁰ Benefit costs include police pension, disability, FICA, insurance, worker's compensation, and unemployment claims. For the past 6 fiscal years (2009-2014), the average percent of the benefit cost when compared to the HPD's Total Actual General Fund Budget for classified has been 22.87%.

⁶¹ Benefit costs include civilian pension, disability, FICA, insurance, worker's compensation, and unemployment claims. For the past 6 fiscal years (2009-2014), the average percent of the benefit cost when compared to the HPD's Total Actual General Fund Budget for civilians has been 3.44%.

**Total Personnel Costs as a Percentage
Of Total General Fund Budget**

Figure #12



2. The remaining 6-7% of the budget is allocated to cover supplies, services, and equipment – none of which can be converted directly to personnel costs.

The HPD General Fund budget is dominated by personnel costs; which means additional personnel will have a dramatic effect on the budget.

Contrast this against the city's looming budget deficit for the next few years and it is very easy to see why everyone will be expected to tighten their belts and work with what they have or less! Needless to say the atmosphere for discussing budget expansion to support staff increases for the HPD is pretty gloomy.

Despite the budget outlook, one cannot let the need for increased staffing go unnoticed. The PERF / Justex Report coupled with the information within this report certainly justify the need for growth. To briefly reiterate, the HPD is struggling to:

1. Field two-officer responses to dangerous calls for service;
2. Meet response time goals for Priority Response Code #3, #4, and #5 calls;
3. Maintain adequate visibility as a deterrent to crime in neighborhoods;
4. Sufficiently lower the crime rate through the use of consistent and comprehensive neighborhood interdiction tactics;
5. Adequately enforce traffic laws, which in turn affect mobility;
6. Investigate criminal cases in a timely manner;
7. Successfully clear workable crime cases; and
8. Investigate crashes in a timely manner.

In reading this list, one would think the HPD is in trouble in being able to keep the city safe. That is not the case. These are deficiencies that represent opportunities for improvement that deserve attention. Failure to do so over the long-term will result in more serious problems for the city.

Like most cities across America, police department budgets are NOT based on what they need; they are based on the allocation of funds they receive. That should not be surprising to anybody, as cities must live within their available funding constraints. When additional funds become available for any given year, municipal governments determine how to distribute the money based on perceived need (in Houston's case, compliance with Meet and Confer Agreement stipulations is also mandatory).⁶²

In the case of the HPD, the underlying theme of this report is describing what that need is, which has been expressed in terms of service activities and their expected outcomes both of which are related to headcount. While there may be disagreement on just exactly how much expansion is necessary; there should be no disagreement over the need to adopt a "strategic growth plan" for the HPD.

Strategic Growth Plan

In Section Five, the HPD has set forth a growth goal of 1,220 officers. *A portion of that growth has been described as an immediate need and a portion has been described as needed.* This distinction provides flexibility in determining how one could move forward strategically.

Let's look at the timeframe used to hire police officers. Presently, the HPD is funded to hire three cadet classes containing 70 prospective police officers. The combined total of 210 new hires is supposed to cover attrition.⁶³ There has been no available funding for classified personnel growth since 2008.

Historically speaking, when funding has been available, the HPD has opted to increase the number of cadet classes it runs each year. During the peak hiring years under former Mayor Lanier, the Academy was moving 7 and 8 classes through a year. That placed a huge burden on city finances and the department's ability to provide quality training. But it was a burden the HPD gladly and willingly embraced.

Absent a crisis of some nature, we should abandon that approach as it would be more prudent to use a different hiring timeline which reduces the intensity of hiring to a more manageable

⁶² This discussion in no way minimizes the need to use available funds to reduce debt services. Nor should any city department, especially the HPD fail to demonstrate its commitment to conserving where appropriate and highlighting efficiency gains before justifying a need for growth.

⁶³ The best-case scenario is for the HPD to lose less than 210 officers, which would result in a slight growth increase. The worst-case scenario is the opposite, the HPD loses more than it is funded to replace. The Department has been bouncing back and forth across this line for the past several years. It is anticipated with an aging department, attrition will begin to escalate over 210 personnel.

level – both financially and operationally. For illustrative purposes, *consider adopting a ten-year hiring timeline. Furthermore, within that 10 year period, institute a “sunset provision” that requires the HPD to present before city council every third year the need to continue the pursuit of the growth goal.* This sunset provision is consistent with Dr. Hoover’s (Justex) comment during the Public Safety Committee presentation that work demands analysis results are generally good for 2-3 years.

Let’s examine the comparison of the existing “status quo model” versus a hypothetical “growth model.” The status quo model consists of hiring 3 cadet classes with 70 cadets per class or 210 hires per annum. The growth model will result in hiring 5 classes with 65 cadets per class or 325 hires per annum. Each model will incorporate the current attrition rate of 200 officers per year. The model will only project costs out for 5 years (See Table #40).⁶⁴

Status Quo Model Headcount / Cost Projection*
Table #40

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year	5 th Year
Annual New Hires	210	210	210	210	210
Projected Attrition	200	200	200	200	200
Net Increase	10	10	10	10	10
Cumulative Increase	10	20	30	40	50
Total HPD Classified Personnel Cost**	596,348,582	592,780,473	591,149,840	591,194,206	591,842,803

* Source: Budget and Finance Office, Houston Police Department, September 2014

** Includes benefit costs

Observations:

1. This assumes an actual graduation and deployment of 210 new officers when in actuality attrition during academy and field training time periods will occur.
2. The net and cumulative increases are dependent on a stable attrition rate, which will not occur with the aging of the HPD’s current staff.
3. The cost figures do not include any impending salary base pay raises necessitated by any Meet and Confer Agreement (a 4% increase will occur in June, 2015).

⁶⁴ Projecting costs out beyond 5 years is extremely risky as revenue can ebb and flow in shorter time periods. Furthermore, personnel costs become greater after 5 years when one includes step adjustments, special pays, and possible pay raises. Plus, there is the added expense associated with the cost of doing business. This comparison is not meant to mislead, but to be illustrative.

4. Costs will remain relatively stable for two reasons. First, the net gain is insufficient to warrant a large increase in personnel costs. Second, senior officers who are retiring cost the city more than their replacements. Some of this gain helps offset additional costs.

Let's contrast this against a hypothetical growth model where 5 classes of 65 cadets each are hired per year (See Table #41):

Growth Model Headcount / Cost Projection*
Table #41

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year	5 th Year
Annual New Hires	325	325	325	325	325
Projected Attrition	200	200	200	200	200
Net Increase	80	135	125	125	125
Cumulative Increase	80	215	340	465	590
Total HPD Classified Personnel Cost**	599,531,093	601,804,124	607,486,583	615,559,849	624,390,971

Source: Budget and Finance Office, Houston Police Department, September 2014

** Includes benefit costs

*

Observations:

1. The first and second year net increase numbers are reflective of the number of cadets graduating from the current 3 class / 70 per class model. There is an assumption this "adjustment period" will occur whenever effort is taken to increase staffing by any number.
2. Observations #1 - #4 cited above for the Status Quo Model also apply to this model.
3. Although Table #41 only reflects the growth and costs for 5 years, a continuation of hiring 5 classes with 65 cadets per class nets out 1,215 personnel at the 10-year mark. While we can generate the hiring formula, it would be inappropriate to project costs for the additional 5 years (hence the value of a sunset provision).

A comparison of the two models reveals the following differences (See Table #42):

**Comparison of Headcount / Cost Projections
Between Two Models***

Table #42

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year	5 th Year	Cumulative Totals
Growth Model Headcount Gain	80	135	125	125	125	590
Status Quo Model Headcount Gain	10	10	10	10	10	50
Difference	70	125	115	115	115	540
Cost of Difference	3,182,509	9,023,652	16,336,741	24,365,642	32,548,169	85,456,713

* Source: Budget and Finance Office, Houston Police Department, September 2014; includes benefit costs

Observations:

1. The previous observations for each of the two aforementioned models apply to this comparison.
2. *Although the growth model asserts a gain of 540 officers, it should be duly recognized during this 5 year time period, the HPD is actually training an additional 1,000 officers that are needed to cover attrition (at a rate of 200 per year, adjusted accordingly).*
3. The cost escalation from one year to the next is attributed to two simultaneous occurrences. First, each class of cadets has a set cost for the first year dependent upon the time of the fiscal year the class starts. Second, with each future year, graduates of previous cadet classes gain in salaries (due to step increases and those who qualify for special pays). This occurs irrespective of which model is applied.
4. The \$85M figure covers the cost of growth (i.e., 540 new officers). The cost of training the 1,000 officers to cover 5 years of attrition is already built into the base budget. This cost is subject to changes in base salaries and benefit costs over the time period.

Clothing / Equipment Costs: all cadet classes have “start-up” costs.⁶⁵ These costs are attributed to the acquisition of Tasers, uniforms, body armor, radios, court and holiday costs, and related training costs (e.g., overtime, and special pays for trainers / mentors). Start-up costs, excluding vehicle related expenses, are approximately \$1,073,763 for a class of 65.

⁶⁵ Start-up costs for replacement officers are already included in the base budget. This discussion focuses only on costs for classified personnel over and above attrition coverage.

The first five years of the growth plan would produce approximately 540 officers (this assumes the plan survives the first sunset provision). Since replacements for attritted officers are already included in the base budget, we need only be concerned with costs for growth personnel. The 540 growth officers are equivalent to approximately 8 classes of 65. This equates to a total start-up cost for a growth of 540 officers of \$8.6 million.

Vehicle Costs – this variable must also be included in the financial forecast.⁶⁶ Approximately 440 of the 540 officers would be assigned to patrol to increase the capacity to send officers to dangerous calls; plus, increase neighborhood visibility and provide various crime prevention services. Additional vehicles would be needed for the increased number of patrol sergeants; and vehicles would be needed for investigative assignments.⁶⁷ Total vehicular costs for the first 5 years of the hiring plan would be approximately \$8.2 million.

Promotion Costs – consideration must also be given to cost differences incurred when creating new sergeant positions and promoting an officer into those positions. The initial step of creating a position necessitates a need to replace an officer who is promoted. The cost of officer replacements (for 140 new sergeants) has already been incorporated into costs contained within Tables #41 and #42. A cost differential is then computed by subtracting the weighted average of an officer / senior officer (\$57,235) from the average cost of a sergeant (\$78,337). The difference equates to \$21,102 which is then multiplied by the 140 positions for a total of \$2,954,280 or approximately \$590,856 if evenly distributed across the first five years of the plan.

Total approximate costs for the first five years of the strategic growth plan are included in Table #43:

⁶⁶ Conservatively, the HPD is estimating one additional vehicle per five new hires (growth only, not replacement). For an entire cadet class of 65, that would equate to 13 marked vehicles for an estimated cost of \$699,790. This figure includes cost of vehicle, estimated fuel use, estimated maintenance above warranty coverage, mobile radio, computer, and air time. This estimate also assumes the current fleet is properly sized; if not, then these estimations would be decreased accordingly.

⁶⁷ An estimated total of 88 marked duty vehicles are needed for 440 additional officers. This equates to approximately \$4.7 million. A total of 52 marked duty vehicles (3 for each of the 14 patrol divisions) are needed for sergeants, which equates to \$3 million. The additional 100 investigators would also need an infusion of unmarked duty vehicles – a soft estimate would be 30 – which equates to approximately \$500,000 at current vehicle contract prices (which will surely increase over time).

Projected Cost for First 5-Years*

Table #43

Growth Budget Variables	Approximate Costs
Compensation and Benefits	\$85,500,000
Clothing / Equipment	\$8,600,000
Vehicular (contains all associated costs)	\$8,200,000
Promotional Costs	\$3,000,000
Total Cost:	\$105,300,000

*Source: Houston Police Department, September 2014

This cost is not distributed equally across the five years. Initial costs are minimal, but increase considerably over time (see Table #42). Two important points need to be made. First, there are potential offsets to this cost, which will be discussed below. Second, the second five-year compensation costs will increase as the first wave of new officers (from the first five years) attain tenure and qualify for step increases, training, and incentive pays.

Civilianization Offset

This staffing plan recommends the HPD increase its operational staffing by approximately 1,220 officers over time. A point of clarification is in order – ***the manner in which this occurs should not mean the HPD will grow its classified headcount by 1,220 officers.*** As is the case with any response to a work demands analysis, there are different methods available that can collectively assist in achieving intended results, for example:

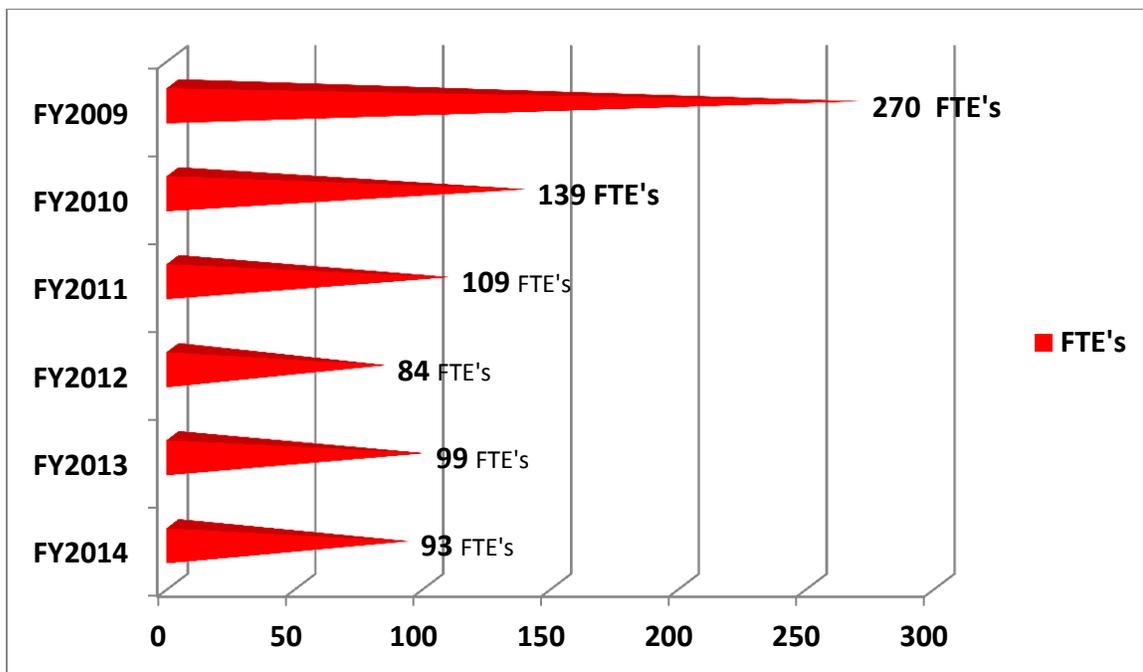
1. Managing time utilization of the existing force – police executives constantly struggle with using the available staff. Like any organization, officers are entitled to time off, be it their regular days off or for expected and unexpected reasons (e.g., vacations, sick, special occurrences, etc.). Policies and the Meet and Confer Contract requirements govern how much time can be taken off. Management is accountable for determining how staff is deployed and utilized in lieu of those who are off. Suffice to say, the more people off, the more difficult it becomes to sufficiently and consistently meet service demands.
2. Retasking personnel – this occurs when existing duties no longer need to be performed. The most obvious example is the impending closure of the city’s jail facilities. Approximately 80+ classified personnel will be available for reassignment. Those officers and sergeants who receive an operational assignment would serve as an offset to the proposed 1,220 positions (that would include reducing costs from the projection in Table #43). Reassigning personnel is a no cost adjustment to the city’s budget. At some point in the future, there may be an additional offset associated with forensic operations. If civilians replace classified personnel, they

could also receive an operational assignment.⁶⁸ These are two rare instances occurring within the HPD. One should not rush to judgment regarding the prevalence of other similar examples, as they currently do not exist within the department.

3. Overtime – the use of overtime can increase the full time equivalent (FTE) headcount. Typically, overtime is used during the course of a calendar year for specific purposes (e.g., crime initiatives, traffic initiatives, special events, etc.). Even though overtime is used intermittently, by year’s end one can calculate how much additional staffing the overtime produced for a given year.

The HPD has been fortunate to have overtime funds designated within its budget. However, the amount of General Fund overtime and ensuing FTEs has been decreasing over the past few years (See Figure #13):

HPD General Fund Overtime FTEs*
FY 2009 – 2014
Figure #13



*Source: Budget and Finance, Houston Police Department, September 2014

⁶⁸ The details as to how this would occur are delineated in the Meet and Confer Agreement. No classified personnel will be removed from their current forensic assignment unless they demonstrate incompetence. Furthermore, if a classified person retires, management within the Forensic Science Center still retains the option to request a classified replacement.

This downward trend has resulted in the loss of approximately 177 FTEs from FY 2009 to FY 2014.

Overtime is calculated at time and a half of an officer’s base pay. A comparison of overtime costs to the salary and benefit cost of hiring a new officer is pretty much a break-even scenario. The higher cost of a veteran officer’s salary offsets the benefit costs of a newly hired officer. There are other types of savings such as time and effort to recruit new hires, start-up costs, and training costs (all of which are mostly sunk costs) would be affected proportionately.

Lastly, overtime does have the distinct advantage of tasking veteran officers – they are experienced which enhances the flexibility of how they are used. The bottom line is the use of overtime can and probably should be part of the expansion plan for the HPD. If a portion of overtime funding is permanently dedicated for operational use, the number of officers would be reduced and counted as an off-set of the proposed 1,220 growth projection.

4. Civilianization – this brings us to civilianization, which serves as a fourth method used to redeploy personnel. This method does not come without costs. First, one would assume it would be less expensive to replace a classified officer with a civilian. In examining a point-in-time analysis of civilian versus classified cost comparison for the HPD, we find this premise to be true, See Table #44:

Civilian / Classified Compensation Differential*

Table #44

	Projected Headcount For FY15 FTEs	Total Compensation W/ Pay & Benefits	Average Cost Per Employee
Civilians	1,159	\$79,281,760	\$68,411
Classifieds	5,194	\$627,201,128	\$120,755
Cost Difference (% Difference)			\$52,344 (77%)

*Source: Budget and Finance, Houston Police Department, September 2014

The cost difference is significant. However, one must keep in mind this comparison does not address the hiring of civilian “specialists.” If such skill sets are needed, one could expect to pay more for the replacement. Why would one do this if an officer performs adequately? This boils down to accepting “adequate performance” versus hiring someone who brings more specialized experience and robust performance to the job. The debate is not which one (classified vs. civilian) can perform the job, but who can perform the job more effectively?

Second, there are consequences when increasing civilian staff within the HPD. Over the years, Houston has struggled with their budget obligations; maybe not nearly as much as other cities, but there has been a struggle. More recently, this resulted in furloughs (fortunately not layoffs), which was certainly disruptive. When this decision is made, the last to be laid off (depending on the size of the deficit) are police officers and fire fighters.

Conversely, civilians are considered more expendable as most do not have a direct effect on public safety. The larger the loss of civilians, the more damaging it is to service levels when classifieds are reassigned to fill the vacated civilian positions. This is certainly not a desired state of affairs, but given the nature of a looming budget crisis, it is an unregrettable, but understandable course of action. As long as everyone knows the consequences, then adjustments are made and everyone moves forward.

In Section Six a potential pool of over 400 positions within the HPD could be reviewed to determine the extent of civilianization. One aspect of this review would be determining if assignments could be consolidated. Whereas two police officers are performing different duties, it is not unreasonable to assess the prospects of hiring one civilian as opposed to two. That immediately raises the question as to how many situations like this presently exist in the HPD. It is unlikely there are very many; but this is more of an issue of job re-engineering than it is an issue of using existing personnel insufficiently (which has been used successfully in the HPD's ISO certified divisions).

As police officers are redeployed to operational assignments, the funding to cover civilian replacement costs would come from funds identified to hire additional police officers. Rather than hire an extra officer, the HPD would hire a replacement civilian and count the reassigned officer against the overall growth count (1,220). There is no need for a supplemental hiring fund for civilians; one "pot of money" should be sufficient to cover all hiring costs.

Under ideal circumstances, over time, the actual need for additional classified would be offset by some number of classified bodies from civilianized and re-tasked positions.

If we take all of these primary factors into consideration, a hypothetical staffing scenario could look similar to Figure #14:

Hypothetical Growth Plan Scenario

Figure #14



This growth plan represents nothing more than a vision if funding is not made available for the HPD to act. Efforts will continue to ensure steps are being taken to use current personnel wisely. And if the situation is such that funding is not made available anytime soon, the HPD will provide services to the best of its ability.

But at some point in time, citizens should not become alarmed when requests for expanded service are met with resistance. Resources can only be stretched so far, and balancing competing work demands can only be done for so long before difficult decisions are made that restrict the type or intensity of services provided. The HPD is reluctantly beginning to experience this. This situation will become exacerbated as Houston continues to grow. Any decisions made to prevent this from becoming too difficult to manage going forward would be in the city's best interest.

Section Eight Conclusion

Houston has been and continues to be one of the most thriving metropolises in the United States. To its credit, Houston is known as being one of the most diverse cities in America. That distinction and growth is not a happenstance occurrence.

People gravitate to Houston for a number of combined reasons – among them are:



**Reasons for Moving
To Houston**
Figure #15

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs
Low Taxes
Low Cost of Living
Great Food
Major Pro Sports Teams
Big Businesses
Arts and Culture Venues
Population Diversity
Parks and Green Space
Education
Recreation

For each and every one of these reasons, one of the most underlying concerns is safety, not only one's personal safety but for their families as well. If a city has a reputation for being unsafe; if fear for one's well-being takes center stage, then corporations, small businesses, and people will not come to any city regardless of their benefits.

Houston is a relatively safe city; crime is not running rampant, but it does have more than its fair share of property crime when compared to other major cities in the United States. Most annoying is traffic congestion, despite the seemingly endless attempts to enlarge the highway network, improve bus services, and slowly move into the realm of rail.

This report, more than anything else serves as a forewarning. Houston's spectacular growth spurts are not without consequences, especially when it comes to public safety. As noted

earlier, the HPD is not experiencing a staffing crisis like many departments who have had to entrench during the past several years because of budget crunches. As Houston and the surrounding region continue to grow, the HPD will begin experiencing difficulty in maintaining current service levels. It will become even more challenging to promptly and sufficiently handle expanded requests for specialized services without an infusion of personnel.

No one has a crystal ball and forecasting, let alone predicting, is always risky. But if one had to venture a reasonable guess about future demands affecting the HPD's ability to keep Houston safe, the following concerns are noteworthy (in no particular order):

1. Increased Population Density – will affect multi-family communities all throughout Houston even more so in the future than today. We are already seeing such effects in the Central Business District, Mid-Town, and other neighborhoods within the 610 Loop. As “pockets of density” either emerge or grow within an already sprawling city, the HPD will be forced to adjust deployment strategies (which are based on the number and availability of personnel).
2. Increased Regulatory Enforcement – alternative housing facilities, bicycle safety, environmental violations, water conservation, are apt to demand more attention in the future.
3. Green Space Protection – a growing, diversified population can be expected to want access to and use parks and public green spaces for more frequent cultural celebrations. These events are in addition to city initiated / approved events (e.g., parades, festivals, etc.). The Chicago Police Department, by way of comparison, dedicates an enormous amount of resources for these events in the summer months.
4. At Risk Youth – if some aspect of Houston's future is dependent on the production of educated youth from our high schools, we can expect additional problems if graduation rates tumble as a result of an inordinate amount of children drop out of school (i.e., an obvious nexus would be reflected in increased gang membership and activity). This will place more pressure on the HPD to cope with these consequences. It is not unreasonable to expect the HPD to take a more active role in working with this population to convince them to not become involved in criminal activity.
5. Probation / Parole Activity – as this population's presence grows, there is always the likelihood more recidivists will be active in Houston. The HPD has no interest in becoming directly involved with the management of these operations; however, it would behoove them to dedicate resources to becoming a better partner.

6. Relentless Growth of Vehicular Crashes – this will continue placing a huge burden on the HPD as the highway network becomes even more crowded. It might not be too surprising if the HPD at some point in the future advocates not responding to minor crashes – absent special circumstances requiring them to do so.
7. Cyber Crimes – as a society, we may have yet to see just how troublesome these crimes will become. Every day we read about security breaches of major corporations within America, each with a possible trickle-down effect into our own lives. As we become more dependent on various high tech devices, opportunities for criminal activity will surely grow.
8. More Elderly Abuse and Neglect – expect this problem to grow immensely over the next couple of decades resulting in more investigative and possibly regulatory work for the HPD.
9. Proliferation of Mental Health Problems – with few options available to treat and / or assist this population, more crime and disorder problems will emerge for the HPD. A quick glance at the Mental Health Division call statistics already reveals a steady increase in requests for the HPD to respond to situations involving citizens experiencing these debilitating health problems.
10. Target Hardening – a more concerted effort must be made to change behavior patterns of citizens who knowingly or unknowingly create easy opportunities for certain types of crimes to occur. This is not to suggest or imply all crime can be prevented; nor is it being suggested citizens are responsible for preventing all crime for in both instances, they certainly cannot. However, the “theft epidemic” in Houston is related in large part to citizen behavior. The HPD has a responsibility to assist citizens in reversing this trend.
11. Increased Community Interaction – as Houston becomes more diverse it is vital relationships continue to emerge and evolve with all cultures, inclusive of citizens who for whatever reasons are highly distrustful of the police. Lack of knowledge and understanding between citizens and police fuel distrust, which is exacerbated when the police are inaccessible or are disinterested, both of which contribute to an image of anonymity. There will be continued pressure for the HPD to reach out, discuss, and debate issues concerning protection of rights and safety to citizen groups. The HPD must continue demonstrating its willingness to dialogue with citizens even on the toughest of issues.
12. Immigration – despite this being a politically sensitive issue, Houston must constantly avail itself to implications of people wanting to come to America seeking a better life. The HPD must continue its efforts in working with its partners to reduce levels of crime, irrespective of whom the suspect is or where s/he has come from. The HPD must become more vigilant in its response to human trafficking and

human smuggling; and make doubly sure lines of communication are open to provide assistance to those in need, regardless of their immigration status.

It remains to be seen if any of these future issues become more prominent within Houston. If they begin applying unmitigated pressure on the HPD over and above the crime and disorder issues already discussed within this report, it will further debilitate how the HPD's existing resources will be used.

If there is concurrence with the overriding theme within this report, then steps must be taken to prepare for future challenges rather than wait until after the fact and then attempt to catch up. The first and most important step is developing an on-going capacity to fund additional staff for the HPD.

As noted in this report, it is not unreasonable to develop a ten-year hiring plan with a sunset provision every third year to assess the status of hiring up to that point in time; and to determine what the need is for the next 3-year cycle. This approach provides a check and balance for the city and the Department and negates an unabated commitment to reach a certain number of additional staff that may, over the long-term prove not to be necessary. It will be up to Department officials to justify the need to continue moving forward.

Civilianization plays a crucial "off-set role" in the hiring plan. There is no reason to believe officers cannot be moved into an operational assignment if competent civilians can be hired to replace them. Whether or not such moves will expedite the retirement of current veteran officers remains to be seen. What must not be missed in this endeavor is the notion of using police officers for purposes they were hired, trained, and mentored to perform. If civilianization is to occur in earnest, efforts must be taken to avoid permanently laying them off during times of economic crisis as this could be quite crippling in terms of service delivery throughout Houston.

PERF and Justex independently justified HPD's need for additional officers. Their methodology linked growth potential to performance variables. This report contains in-depth insight into the status of those variables to further demonstrate the need for more staff.

According to recent reports, the upcoming fiscal years stand to be difficult for Houston employees. As has occurred previously, decisions, some more difficult than others, will be made to successfully plot a course to navigate the city through this challenge. The HPD needs assurances when the time is appropriate, this document will serve as the catalyst to move forward with a firm commitment to help keep Houston safer so citizens can pursue their quality of life aspirations without experiencing unreasonable levels of fear for their personal safety.